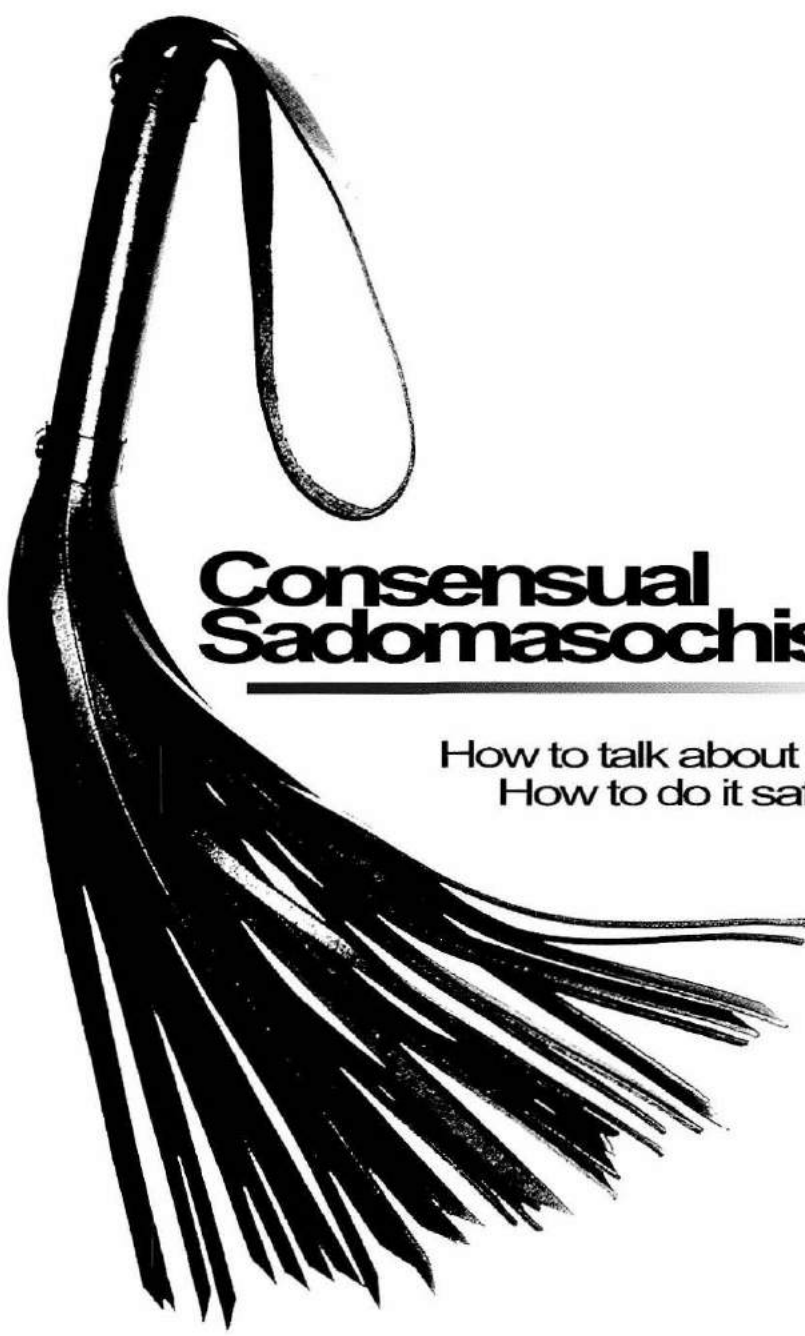




Consensual Sadomasochism

How to talk about it &
How to do it safely

William A. Henkin Ph.D. and Sybil Holiday, CCHT

SECOND EDITION

Consensual Sadomasochism

Some Other Books by William A. Henkin

The Rocky Horror Picture Show Book

The Psychic Healing Book (with Amy Wallace)

The Spiral Tapestry

Bodywise (with Joseph Heller)

Consensual Sadomasochism

How To Talk About It
And
How To Do It Safely

William A. Henkin, Ph.D.
and
Sybil Holiday, CCHT

Daedalus Publishing Company
2140 Hyperion Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90027

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2nd Edition 2003

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Daedalus Publishing Company,
2140 Hyperion Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90026
www.daedaluspublishing.com

Edited by Richard Labonte

Indexed by Victoria Baker,
Revised Index by Linda Santiman

Cover design by Steve Diet Goedde

ISBN 1-881943-12-7

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 96-85422

Printed in the United States of America

Dedication

To the members of the San Francisco leather communities, without whom this book could not have come into being.

The truer liberation of emotion lies in accepting the fact that there are a million facets to it, a million forms of eroticism, a million objects of it, situations, atmospheres, and variations. We have, first of all, to dispense with guilt concerning its expansion, then remain open to its surprises, varied expressions, and (to add my personal formula for the full enjoyment of it) fuse it with individual love and passion for a particular being, mingle it with dreams, fantasies, and emotion for it to attain its highest potency.

— Anaïs Nin

Pain is inevitable; suffering is optional.

— Buddha's second noble truth, rediscovered as graffiti on bathroom wall in the Riviera Bar, Eugene, Oregon, 1985, culled by Jenne Blade

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Changes: An Introduction to the Second (Revised) Edition

In 1996, when *Consensual Sadomasochism* first appeared, participant literature about BDSM was still fairly rare. Yet the field was clearly growing, and partly for that reason we did not conceive of our contribution as an introductory text, but rather as something that could accompany or follow the various fine SM primers that had recently come on the market, including Race Bannon's *Learning the Ropes*, Patrick Califia's *Sensuous Magic*, and Jay Wiseman's *SM 101*.

Revising our book at the sunrise of a new century, our purpose has not changed. But the SM community has changed remarkably since 1996, and so has its literature. It would take a volume beyond the scope of ours to document all those changes, but a few brief observations pertain to this book.

When we wrote the original version of *Consensual Sadomasochism*, all the activities now called BDSM were generally known by the umbrella term of "SM" (or S/M, or S&M) or "leathersex." Like some other people at the time, we made a conspicuous distinction in our teaching and writing between the physicality of sadism and masochism (SM) and the psychology of dominance and submission (DS); other people especially enjoyed activities they believed were more accurately seen as bondage and discipline (BD). Over time, as the SM community expanded into multiple communities, the single, more encompassing, overlapping letter-conglomerate BDSM emerged as a way to combine all three practices under a single alphabetic umbrella: BD, DS, SM. Partly to acknowledge the roots from which our play styles emerged, we, ourselves, frequently continue to use the older, more discrete phrases, while recognizing that we are now participants in the wider world of BDSM.

In 1996 San Francisco was still pretty much the red hot center of American SM, at least on the west coast, though not nearly to the extent it had been a decade and two decades earlier. But still there were just a handful of SM activities each month here – a few meetings, a few parties, classes that were beginning to burgeon. As we write now, on the cusp of 2003/4, you could attend a different SM event pretty much every night of the year in the San Francisco Bay Area and still not take in everything.

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Yet, what we do here is really just a drop in the proverbial bucket. According to one source, combining the list of SM activities posted under “Directory” at the primarily gay *Leather Journal* www.theleatherjournal.com/ with the list of the het/pansexual BDSM – find the local scene near YOU! www.darkheart.com/sceneusa.html yields more than 800 active BDSM groups in the United States, ranging from small local meetings to major conventions like Black Rose and Thunder in the Mountains to the annual Leather Leadership Conference. There is no major, secondary, or tertiary urban area in the country where you can’t whip, get whipped, learn to whip, analyze whips and whipping, buy a whip, make a whip, or watch a whipping at a public forum almost any night you want.

In addition, as those URLs above suggest, America and much of the rest of the world have by now gotten deeply into the cybernetic revolution people had already begun to talk about in 1996, back when we still capitalized WWW and had to explain what the world wide web was. Today the web is so commonplace you don’t even have to type in the boilerplate “<http://www>” in order to surf. The SM bulletin boards that were a cool new way for players to find each other are almost all gone in favor of chat rooms, which are changing rapidly even as we type, instant messaging, IRC channels, ICQ, linked websites that can take you pretty much anywhere, cell phones with cameras that link to the web themselves, and the ubiquitous search engines that can bring you almost any piece of information available in the world in seconds. The promise of the world wide web has become an overwhelming reality in much less than a decade, and it has affected the worlds of BDSM profoundly.

To keep our observations current, as well as our information, we’ve updated our glossary, tweaked many pages, revised our Resources section, and completely redone our information on Cyber SM. We’ve also added a few new sections for this edition, including some pages on “How to Find an SM-Positive (or Neutral) Therapist,” “Monogamous SM Relationships,” and “Aftercare.”

Finally, a great number of excellent new books have appeared on a wide range of BDSM-related topics, while a few books and many of the magazines we originally profiled have gone out of print. We’ve updated our Bibliography accordingly, adding some of what we believe are the best of the best; we’ve also included some terrific videos.

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Perhaps there'll be a third edition to this book – who knows? So feel free to let us know your thoughts. We're both too busy to engage in fresh email correspondences, so we probably won't write back; but we'll be glad to read your emails and consider your suggestions when the time might come. Sybil is at mholiday@spiralway.com, and Bill is at oroborous@earthlink.net. You can also reach us by postal mail at Daedalus Publishing Company, 2140 Hyperion Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90027, or by email c/o info@daedaluspublishing.com

Thanks for visiting our book.

WAH / SH

21 December 2003

Disclaimers and Acknowledgments

In deference to the contemporary problem of identifying humans in the third person singular without appearing to prefer one gender over the other, or stumbling syntax or bad grammar over both, we have used masculine and feminine forms more or less randomly in this book except when the content of a specific sentence or paragraph seemed to dictate otherwise. When speaking of SM play or players we have also capitalized “Top” and lower-cased “bottom.” We both switch to varying degrees, and do not mean to impugn the value of bottoms or their equality with Tops; we do mean to honor the long-standing SM tradition of making the consensual power exchange clear.

We wrote the Language sections of this book to define, demystify, and clarify communication regarding the physical activities (SM) and the emotional and psychological facets (DS) of consensual erotic power exchange. We wrote the portions on SM safety to enhance the pleasure people take in these activities in the long term, by broadening their knowledge of safe play practices.

SM is a sophisticated form of eroticism that sometimes entails risks that can be identified ahead of time. For example, after about the age of 45 people are increasingly subject to the risks of silent coronary artery disease, so by this stage of life everyone should be especially cautious about being gagged, being the subject of any form of neck play, having their chests sat on or otherwise compressed, and so forth. And any bleeding from any orifice *must* be explained. We’ll discuss avoiding risks at greater length in “SM Safety,” beginning on page 161.

While we are concerned that people play safely, we are not physicians and nothing we say should be read as if we were. Neither can we be responsible for other people’s behavior. If you are uncertain or unsatisfied about the health and safety information we provide, seek to expand or clarify your knowledge from trained health care personnel—preferably those sex-positive women and men who are sufficiently familiar with SM that they won’t give you a hard time just for seeking information. If you don’t know of such health care people ask your friends or other community

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members for referrals, or research them through sex information lines in your area. Failing all else, ask the person directly, on the phone, before you visit, if she or he believes that the erotic activities you enjoy brand you as a sinner, a criminal, or a psychopath.

Most SM practices are as safe as any other form of erotic play. Here, as elsewhere, never do anything you believe might endanger your well-being or the well-being of your partners. Learn about the workings of the body: consider taking courses in anatomy and physiology, First Aid, and CPR. Maintain your health. No matter what advice we or anyone else may offer, you are finally responsible for your own life and welfare. Nobody but you can force you to engage in any SM practice, and nobody but you can stop you from doing so, either.

Since we wrote "SM Safety" as a safety guide *only*, and neither as a technical nor a how-to manual, we have been chiefly concerned in its pages with what *not* to do in SM play. In that sense this book is meant as a companion volume to all the excellent how-to manuals already available. For more information about what *to* do, and about specific play techniques and how to execute them, consult the books by Christine Abernathy, Guy Baldwin, Race Bannon, Joseph Bean, Pat Califia, Dossie Easton, Trevor Jacques, Catherine Liszt, Jack Rinella, Larry Townsend, John Warren, and Jay Wiseman listed in our Bibliography.

In addition to the information we have gleaned from those authors and from our own hands-on experience, we've derived refinements and additional information from educational programs offered by NLA International and their annual Living in Leather conferences, QSM, the Society of Janus, and The Outcasts, as well as from The Outcasts' safety guide, which we used for teaching purposes, with permission, for nearly five years while developing our own.

In our Bibliography we have specifically refrained from listing magazines whose chief purpose is to provide erotic entertainment or contact listings. There are many such publications, some quite good; but since ours is intended as an educational book, we have restricted our magazine entries to educational periodicals. We've included a very few books of fiction in our Bibliography: we think they are all exemplary in some way—the best embodiments we know of their forms or archetypes—

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and so we think of them also as educational tools, but none of them would be on our list if we didn't find them good reads as well.

Some paragraphs in the section on doing psychotherapy in the dungeon were adapted from our article, "It's Never Too Late To Have a Happy Childhood," published in *Sandmutopian Guardian* #s 16 and 17, 1994. Some parts of the sections on negotiation, knowing what you need and what you want, self-esteem, and doing psychotherapy in the dungeon, were adapted from Bill's "Ask the Therapist" columns, originally published in *Growing Pains*, the newsletter of the Society of Janus. Because, perhaps, much in life is circular, some of those columns got *their* start in Introduction to SM courses we taught together throughout the 1990s.

Though we have taught SM courses for players, therapists, educators, and the curious from California to Florida to Massachusetts, Karen Mendelsohn provided us with our original and ongoing venue through QSM, which is really where this book got its start. Race Bannon, Chris and Cathy, Edward Goehring, and Rob Jellinghaus provided or corrected some of our information on using the internet, and other aspects of cybersex. Robert Morgan Lawrence, D.C. and Lynne I. Portnoy, M.D. reviewed "SM Safety," correcting our medical misconceptions and offering some of their own observations. Victoria Baker, Race Bannon, Robert Morgan Lawrence, D.C., and Charles Moser, M.D. reviewed our whole manuscript in different stages. B. Rieben provided the illustrations on pages 172 and 182. We are deeply grateful for the time all these people devoted to our project and for the suggestions they made, many of which found their ways into these pages.

Sybil particularly wants to thank Cléo Dubois for introducing her to the world of consensual SM. She also thanks Cléo, Wendy Dalton, and the late Mark Joplin for hosting the original Serpent Mountain play parties where she first got the chance to practice what she preaches; the late Fred Haramb for creating the environment in which those parties could take place and for setting an example; Mistress Corona for being her first trainer; Mark I. Chester and the late David Lourea, who gave her her first two whippings; and Greg Loy, who was her first slave. Bill thanks Master Roger for teaching him the difference between pain and fear of pain; Pat Califia and Dorothy Allison for holding the door open when it first started

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to close; the late David Lourea for showing him the music of the whip; Dossie Easton and Gayle Rubin for being articulate and responsive; and especially Sybil for being *his* first trainer.

One or the other or both of us owes an additional debt of gratitude to many people who have been, one way or another, uncompromisingly steadfast beacons of support, sometimes without even knowing that they were. Among them are:

Dorothy Allison, Victoria Baker, Joseph Bean, Dr. Big, Kaye Buckley, Pat Califia, Mark I. Chester, Wendy Dalton, Cléo Dubois, Dossie Easton, Raelyn Gallina, Edward Goehring, Hal, Robert Lawrence, Greg Loy, Jay Marston, Fakir Musafar, Nilos Nevertheless, Nicolai Notwithstanding, Ram Narasimha, Carol Queen, Michael Rosen, Gayle Rubin, Cynthia Slater, Kat Sunlove, Jim Ward, Layne Winklebleck, Kurt Woodill, and BLW, PSD Services, the Outcasts, and the Society of Janus.

And we both extend a special thanks to Denise Claire O'Dell, without whose hard work and cooperation this book could never have been written.

Finally, this book is ours, and we take full responsibility for its perspective and for whatever insights and errors it may contain. Nonetheless, we are grateful for the assistance all these people and groups provided us, as well as for their pioneering efforts to ensure that the motto of the organized SM community, "Safe, sane, and consensual," was not just empty rhetoric.

Foreword

Self-acceptance, self-esteem, pride, and dignity form the foundation of a happy life. They are also the four qualities which most novice SMers find most difficult to realize within themselves. In this culture, it is difficult to feel proud when the sting of a whip is your idea of a sensual caress. When we dare to confess our fantasies to lovers, we face rejection or are told to seek professional counseling and be “cured” of our sexual desires. (And unenlightened professionals have often tried—and failed, miserably—to do just that.) We are taught that to crave forbidden sensations, to hunger for taboo thrills, to journey into sexual transcendence are sins.

More than anything, we lack sufficient role models and mentors who can show us that it is possible to explore and even to celebrate our radical sexual natures safely and lovingly.

Those of us who crave to act out the primal sexual drama of dominance and submission explicitly—whether through elaborate rituals of goddess worship or complex Master/slave fantasies, whether by submitting to bondage or having our bodies pierced—are repeatedly sent the message that who we are and what we want are all wrong. We are told this by people who represent authority in our lives—our parents, our teachers, our doctors, our clergy. Ever since sadomasochism was identified as a separate and aberrant form of sexuality in the late Nineteenth Century, ugly myths have been substituted for honest information about carnal pleasures which are largely the outgrowth of normal and innate sexual impulses in women and men.

If we do not come to SM with doubts about our own morality, certainly once we begin to face the implications of our sexuality, the pressure is on: we grow embarrassed and ashamed of our needs; we resist them within ourselves. The sadists among us wonder if we are not secretly serial killers in disguise; the masochists wonder if they are not secretly victims. The fetishists find themselves alone, wondering whether their needs to worship feet or to wear rubber means that they are sick.

I’ve heard from crossdressers, for example, that—like bulimics—they go through cycles of binging and purging. They become obsessed with

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dressing, amassing whole collections of clothes and toys. Once the lust wears itself down, they become disgusted or horrified by their excesses and throw everything away, vowing never to do it again. Inevitably, of course, the needs resurface, the collection begins again, and the cycle repeats.

The anxiety about kinky sexuality is so prevalent in our culture that even those of us who have come to terms with our own kinks still often sit in judgment on the kinks of others. I remember attending an SM event once where a group of corset fetishists refused to be seated near the “whips and chains crowd.” Some of the more radical kinks—such as infantilism or watersports—are seldom if ever discussed at SM support groups.

The best panacea for this malaise of misunderstanding and prejudice about sadoomasochistic sexuality is candor. The open dialogue about who we are, what we do, how we play, and what it means to us is our communal testament that sadoomasochists may be unusual in their sexual drives but are nonetheless the same as everyone else: imperfectly perfect human beings.

The work to educate and enlighten was begun over twenty years ago when Larry Townsend penned the first edition of *The Leatherman's Handbook*; Pat Califia has, through her spirited prose and probing rhetoric, helped to make sadoomasochism a clean word; joining them are authors such as Race Bannon, Guy Baldwin, Joseph Bean, the Samois Collective, and a handful of dedicated newcomers. Offering how-to's for people of all predilections, these people have advanced the dissemination of positive, helpful advice on SM.

Although this book joins a growing list of self-help and how-to guides, I was particularly glad, when reading the manuscript, to discover that the authors do something new and exciting within the genre. Bill and Sybil are not only experienced players who can speak to an impressive range of SM activities, but they bring their considerable humanity to bear on this reader-friendly, psychologically insightful volume.

Here is clear, open dialogue about such sensitive issues as self-esteem, mutual respect and caring, and the possibilities for healthy, positive intimacy in SM relationships, combined with practical and straightforward information about how to live out dozens of different fantasies—and even

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how to prepare yourself for, and gently steer your way through, some of the pitfalls and emotional hazards of SM sex.

Especially reassuring about this book is that it is pansexual: whether one is straight, bisexual, lesbian, gay, or still working it out, the authors offer excellent starting-points for conversations and negotiations with one's partners.

Bill—whom his friends also know as Dr. Henkin—brings a unique perspective: he is a vigorously active Scene player, an activist, educator, and a doctor of human sexuality. Sybil—whom her submissives know as “Mistress!”—has been equally active in the Scene and committed to educational outreach; she also shares the wealth of knowledge she gained from her background as a professional dominatrix.

Together they have written a book that is at once personal and professional. Beginning with the stories of their own SM lives, they move on to general discussions of major issues in SM, borrowing from their own experiences to illustrate the lessons they have learned and wish to impart. Their emphasis on communication and mutual respect helps restore the human dimension to SM that clinical literature and popular fiction alike so woefully lack. The reliability of the information on physical and psychological safety in SM is also a pleasure to discover, particularly at a time when quickly-done, poorly-researched SM “vanity” books, extolling the virtues of their authors, are becoming a mainstay of the SM bookshelf.

Here, then, are two knowledgeable, serious, and dedicated SMers who provide a meaningful guide to safe play. This book helps to spread the good word that consensual SM may go hand in hand with a healthy, happy, moral life—a life founded on those four great concepts: self-acceptance, self-esteem, pride, and dignity. Books like this one are our best hope, as a community, for realizing our best qualities.

Gloria G. Brame, Co-author
*Different Loving: The World of
Sexual Dominance and Submission*

Introduction: How We Got Here

Bill's Story

I remember coming to my senses in the middle of a night lit only by the yellow glow from my Pluto lamp: not Pluto, Lord of the Roman Underworld, nor Pluto, the distant, dark planet named for that god, but Pluto, the hound dog who belongs to Mickey Mouse. I was standing on my bed in a panic of frustration because I'd tied my wrists together so securely I could not set them free, and I knew with a six-year-old's special certainty that even though the good guys and the bad guys tied each other up like this all the time on my favorite 1950-era TV cowboy programs, my part in settling the West would be rudely viewed if either of my parents found me bound come morning.

I must have figured my own way out because I have no memory of adult reprisal, as I do have concerning other of my childhood indiscretions. Besides, figuring my own way out has been my life-long journey. This auto-bondage, my very earliest recollected consensual SM experience, may have been metaphorical for the frustration I felt as a child who could not command his destiny—my hands were tied, so to speak. But in retrospect, it seems no less a metaphor for the whole mentality of the switch I came to be, for I was both Top and bottom that night, establishing, confirming, or mirroring whatever ambivalence ruled my youth as well as pointing out the flexibility required for translating people's beliefs, building bridges among them, and other communication skills I later learned and taught explicitly.

A year or two after my scene with Pluto I gave a bare-bottomed birthday spanking to a little neighbor-boy amid the skeletal beginnings of a suburban housing project, and in the ensuing weeks, to our mutual delight, I also tied him down in a nearby copse and administered to his pink bottom a few unibirthday and punishment spankings—bald excuses, since I did not yet know that I could spank him just for the fun of it. This, my first

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SM play relationship with another person, came to a gravel-splattering halt when my friend's 12-year-old sibling slid across the driveway on his flashy chromed Schwinn and told me in no uncertain terms to keep my hands off his brother's ass. Children, as I was learning, don't always have the power to give consent.

A few years later, just at the edge of the onset of puberty, I put myself to sleep each night imagining that I was the commander of a paramilitary force. Our mission: to take over my elementary school classroom. After we'd stormed it and secured it I made everybody strip, then divided the kids into two populations: those I found attractive on the right, safely away from the exit, and those I found unattractive on the left. Thanks to the miracle of fantasy power the teacher and the class bullies were simply not there, and I was unassailable. I sent the goats away with my lieutenants, and had my way with the prettiest sheep.

It took a couple of decades of sex before I discovered the joys of playing with erotic power directly. During those vanilla years I often, smilingly, held my lovers' wrists above their heads while we fucked or grasped their hair to direct their faces—right, left, faster, slower—while they sucked; I pinned their thighs so I could mouth them the way I wanted to, and occasionally turned them over my knee to darken the rounded mounds of their buttocks. A couple of times someone did the same to me, but none of us knew what we were doing and mostly the tortures given and received were painfully poor expressions of my much more holy longing to have erotic power worshiped.

I was in my 30s before I realized that people really did what I could only hazily imagine, and in my awkward way I set out to learn what was what. I was too embarrassed to tell my friends about my search, and too ignorant to go about it systematically, and so, my mind numb with fear and confusion, I did what men have done from time immemorial: I followed my dick. In an effort to learn how to be a Top I visited both female and male professional dominants hoping to learn what excited me and why. Along the way I discovered I was not altogether a Top but a bottom as well, and that most of what I liked to do to some others I also liked some rare others to do to me.

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During the years of my quest, street rumors floated up to my ivory tower apartment every now and then about one bar south of Market Street that kept a tank of live piranha, another where men lay in tub-like urinals so other men could piss on them, and several where men who liked to cause erotic pain went to meet men who liked to feel it. Though I peeked into the Black and Blue, the Brig, and other of the era's leather bars by day, the Folsom Street environs frightened me by night and I only went to the neighborhood after dark to pay surreptitious visits to a couple of bath houses. In one of them I liked to cruise a play room that featured a sling strung from the ceiling by heavy chains, hoping someone would get into it so I could see how it was used. I did not go to the baths looking for whips and black leather, but I certainly did want to tie my lovers up, do things to them, and slowly force them to orgasms over and over again until they cried out for mercy in that agony of pleasure we call ecstasy.

I've sometimes wished that in those years I'd had more courage in my curiosities, and that I'd been willing to follow my heart directly into the scenes that called to me. Instead, I followed a cautious and far more painful round-about trajectory that took me, briefly, to suburbs north and south, and into a marriage so doomed my friends were taking bets at the wedding about how long it would last. Then, less than a year after my wife and I separated, thanks to luck, perseverance, and the graces of the powers that be, I found myself in a blissful SM relationship that suited me to the proverbial "t," right in the middle of what the San Francisco leather scene had become.

I was introduced to the local leather world and discovered that its population held a quantity of intelligent, courageous, open-hearted, and articulate men and women out of all proportion to its absolute numbers. As time went on I found that in this community I could be more readily accepted for who I was in all my facets than I had ever been anywhere else before.

One of the first hands-on discoveries I made about leathersex, also known by the umbrella term of SM, was that it could be extraordinarily hot. Almost immediately I realized that my whole body could do what only my cock had done before, and on the heels of that discovery I recognized that the exchange of erotic energy that lay at the heart of leathersex gave it

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the potential to be a spiritual path of enormous power and immediacy. As Mark Thompson wrote in his book *Leatherfolk*, "The leap of faith required to unite spirit and flesh is much smaller than it appears to be. In fact, in my life and in [those of many other people involved with SM] . . . there is no distance at all separating the two."

Whatever inspired me to be my own captor under Pluto's gaze when I was six led me somehow to the discoveries I made about the spirit and the flesh during the first few years I was involved with the leather community; these discoveries have informed my life ever since. Of course, they also inform whatever I have to say in the pages that follow, for which I am deeply grateful.

Sybil's Story

I am a convert to the arts and practices of erotic power play. Unlike Bill, I did not have early childhood bondage or SM fantasies, nor did I fantasize about SM in my teens or 20s. By the time I was 30, however, I had worked in the adult entertainment industry for a dozen years, mostly as a strip tease artist. As a bisexual I'd enjoyed group sex with both men and women; I'd used many "marital aids," was quite familiar with G-spot orgasms, and all in all considered myself to be rather sophisticated about sex.

But what I knew about SM came from reading inaccurate and uninformed pornography. For instance, in what I had read the scenes were always either:

- nonconsensual: the boss is upset with his secretary, so he ties her over his desk and spanks her; or
- nonconsensual and filled with anger: a housewife, home alone, catches a burglar, hits him over the head with a frying pan, ties him up, and beats him; or

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- filled with anger and low self-esteem: a dominant woman is a man-hating bitch who verbally castrates her groveling slave, who himself has the dignity of a slug.*

None of these scenarios appealed to me. I love men, women, and people in general, and all this posturing seemed to me to be a dysfunctional way to act out childhood abuses. So when, in the early 1980s, a new roommate explained to me that she wanted to put ring bolts in the woodwork of her bedroom to make it easier for her boyfriend to restrain and spank her, I was appalled. "No wonder we've been having power struggles," I thought. "She's into that sick stuff."

But then my roommate joined the Society of Janus in San Francisco, the second-oldest educational and social SM organization in the country. After she'd attended just two meetings she approached me and apologized. "I'm sorry for trying to dominate you nonconsensually," she said. "I didn't realize what I was doing. I only want to have SM and power games in my sex life, with people who want to play with me. Please come to a Janus meeting—SM is not what you think it is."

I was deeply moved by this woman's statement and apology. Besides, if there was something good I didn't know about in the world of sex—well, where could I sign up? The following week I set out to attend my first Janus meeting. My trepidation grew as I approached the door to the meeting hall. Murderers, rapists, psychopaths, weirdos of all sorts—what *would* I meet?

As it turned out I met cab drivers, doctors, students, computer engineers, people from all walks of life, all ages from 21 to 78. Most seemed of above-average intelligence and creativity. They were courteous and polite, and no one seemed to think he or she was worthless. Sure, there were a few odd apples—how could there not be in a group that drew from 25 to 65 people to each meeting? But even they were talking about communication, play techniques, consensuality, and safety. Why, they weren't murderers at all!

*Note to animal rights activists: I am aware that slugs have as much inherent dignity as the next evolving life-form: I just couldn't resist a good line.

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A few weeks later I applied for membership and attended a Janus orientation. Janus does not accept anyone as a member who does not have a genuine interest in SM or related fetishes, so I explained that while I was a newcomer to this world, as a stripper I'd had a fascination with erotic clothing: could my interest in costume be construed as a fetish? The orientation officers agreed that it could, and I became a member a month later.

Janus meetings were held twice monthly, and I attended every one I could. If I'd been so misinformed about consensuality and self-esteem in SM, what other myths did I still believe? I attended meetings on spanking, piercing, bondage, negotiation, Master/slave relationships, and myriad other things. Topics I thought I had no interest in turned out to fascinate me, and better yet, to be sexy. I didn't know where I fit or what I was—Top, bottom, switch, sadist, bondage enthusiast—but I knew I liked the people, their integrity, and the depth and breadth of their communications.

I began to play, slowly at first, and in the fall of 1983 I went to work for a professional Mistress as her assistant, a Mistress-in-Training. As part of my training I was submissive to her, and, under her instruction, dominant over the male clients. In that way I learned how nipple clamps felt as well as how to apply them; how to receive and also how to give a spanking; how to take and how to give orders. This position is sometimes known as being the "middle." In 1985 my roommate and I—the same roommate who had wanted to put ringbolts in the woodwork—decided to open up our own House of Domination. She later became internationally famous for her SM, bondage, and shamanic skills, and I entered the field of sex education. I began giving programs for the Society of Janus in 1985, and have subsequently spoken about SM and related topics at universities, on national and local radio and television shows, and at national and local sexuality conferences. One of my goals is to educate people like me, who, in all good faith, have been misinformed about the joys and delights of safe, sane, consensual erotic power play.

Introduction to the Book

Welcome to the wonderful world of consensual sadomasochism. As our personal introductions may suggest, this is not a world populated by mass murdering serial ogres, but rather by people much like you, your neighbors, and your friends. We are computer programmers and sociologists, physicians and attorneys, police and sales personnel, professors and prostitutes, housewives, plumbers, artists, CEOs, union organizers, and the unemployed. A variety of research studies have shown that unless we're in costume or have specifically identified ourselves ahead of time in some other way, you probably won't be able to pick us out on the street, in your workplace, or at the PTA meeting. Not only are we a great deal *like* you: since you're reading this book, to some extent we *are* you.

But unique as each of us may be, we are not *just* individuals. This book emerges out of the SM community, which is sometimes called the leather community because in its early days it was organized in and around the image of bikers: outlaw—especially gay outlaw—motorcycle gangs, whose members wore leather pants, jackets, and boots both for physical protection against the spills they occasionally took from their bikes, and for the psychological protection a commanding uniform affords members of many warrior and outcast groups, from the Hell's Angels to your local constabulary.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *community* as a religious fellowship, a sharing or holding in common with others, a mutual spiritual intercourse. Although the organized SM community began in gay biker clubs in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it spread to gay biker bars, to gay bars that did not specifically cater to bikers, and finally out into the lesbian, heterosexual, bisexual, and transsexual worlds, often without motorcycles, bars, alcohol, or even leather clothing. It is not uncommon by now in some parts of the leather community for gay men and gay women to play together, even though they would never want their SM partners to be their lovers or spouses. Homosexual, heterosexual, and bisexual people may also play with one another without jeopardizing their orientations, or their standings as members of one group or another. The mutual spiritual intercourse of the SM world is the exchange of erotic energy,

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not necessarily, for example, the exchange of body fluids; and since the exchange of energy that underlies SM is highly erotic even though it is not necessarily genitally sexual, it has been said that leather transcends gender.

Though the SM community began in the gay male subculture, where restricted enclaves flourish even today, by now it also clearly includes people of all genders, all inclinations, and all sexual orientations. Indeed, by now there is not just one leather community, there are many leather communities, some overlapping with others and some even at odds with others about sexual, political, or etiquette issues. As the authors of the book in your hands, we do not hold that gays are better than straights, that women are better than men, that Tops are better than bottoms, or vice-versa—although you will find people both in and out of these communities who do believe those things.

In this book you get the perspectives of Sybil and Bill very specifically. SM as we do it and describe it is an evolving activity within an evolving subculture in an evolving society; its language, too, is evolving. We've come to what we know by experience, by practice, by examination, by thought, and by our own life processes. Other people may have very different positions about some issues than we have, and we urge you to find out what they have to say. That way you can make your own informed decisions about what these activities and these communities have to offer you, what they mean to you, what you have to offer them, and where you fit in or if you do at all.

As we have written it, this book is *not* a justification for SM, a scholarly examination of SM, a tool to recruit or proselytize for SM, or a pop-psychology self-help tome. It *is* an examination of the language and processes that surround and infuse SM, sometimes known as *erotic power exchange*. The *Oxford English Dictionary*—once again—interprets *erotic* as whatever is sexual, sensual, and amatory; *power* means the ability to do or act, authority, influence, or force; *exchange* means to give or receive in trade. *Erotic power exchange* means, therefore, to give and/or receive sexual, sensual, amatory force or authority to, from, or with someone else.

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Because some form of give-and-take is involved, the practice of SM, or erotic power exchange, implies parity among players. By parity we do not quite mean equality. If A gives B a candy bar, B should give A an identical candy bar in a strictly equal exchange. But when A gives B a candy bar, B may give A a dollar instead. While A cannot eat the dollar, and B cannot spend the candy bar, if they have agreed that the *worth* of the two objects is equal then their exchange is one of parity. In exactly the same way two people may achieve parity in an exchange of erotic energy when one person who likes to spank, spans another who likes to serve and serves the first person by allowing him to spank her.

In order to encourage the greatest pleasure and safety for people who enjoy these activities, we propose our own Six Commandments of Healthy SM:

1. *Tell the truth*, first to yourself and then to the people with whom you play, at least as far as you know it at the time;
2. *Keep your agreements* with the people with whom you play, to the best of your ability; and if you cannot keep them for any reason, don't change your agreements unilaterally: negotiate with the other parties to those agreements, let them know alterations are in the works, and let them participate in the changes;
3. *Play safely*: SM is a sophisticated form of sexuality, and sometimes it does entail physical and psychological risks; learn enough to know what you and your play partners are doing, to know the difference between what is safe and what is not, and to know what to do if something gets out of hand;
4. *Play consensually*: don't involve people with your sexuality who have not agreed to become involved; play only with people who have agreed to play with you;
5. *Play sanely*: physically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually, SM can be very intense; like any intense activity it has

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the short-term potential to draw people farther into it than they might on other occasions regard as wise; learn your limits, learn the limits your partners want to adhere to, and play within the limits you and your partners have agreed upon;

6. *Play non-exploitably*: not everybody is ready, willing, or able to be involved in SM, but not everyone who is *unready*, *unwilling*, or *unable* knows it; honor people where they are: don't take advantage of someone else's ignorance or vulnerability to satisfy your own ego or desires.

These Commandments, like the underpinnings of all satisfying, safe play, include a bow to the Delphic Oracle: Know Thyself.

What is SM? What is it Not?

Myths, Fears, & Stereotypes

When you think about SM what images come to mind? What words? What feelings or sensations? What myths do you believe about its practices? What stereotypes do you adhere to as if they were fact? What fears or excitements do you have about exploring your interest in this form of erotic expression? And what do you imagine other people important to you—relatives, friends, colleagues, neighbors—might think if they knew you were reading this book? It might be worth your while to set the book aside for a few minutes now to consider those questions for yourself; you might even write your answers down, because the myths, fears, and stereotypes about SM that are alive in you are likely to color the way you learn and the way you play.

Once you've answered the questions, either on paper or in your mind, see if you have these same concerns about sex in general. Probably you do, to some extent. It's become a platitude to say that we live in a sex-negative society where titillation is fine while reality is not, but the evidence is all around. Each year while beer and soda companies sell their products with

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images of leggy women and chesty men, scarce municipal funds are spent to roust prostitutes in cities teeming with violence; prominent members of Congress try to proscribe the very mention of homosexuality in our schools, while many history, psychology, and sociology textbooks make little or no mention of sexual behavior at all; and major public health officials risk their jobs if they advocate protections against pregnancy and STDs, or say that masturbation is a normal human activity.

If our society holds such a pejorative view of common sexual practice, those of us who live in the society must carry those prejudices somewhere within us, even if we know they are wrong. We will improve our odds for having a truly healthy sex life—whether it includes SM or not—if we first know which of our beliefs are based in myth and which in fact. Where knowledge is power of a psychological sort, the power comes from facing our fears and prejudices and learning the truths beneath them. Truth may have the capacity to set us free, but first we have to know what the truth is.

For centuries people in Europe believed the sun, moon, and stars circled the Earth, and Galileo was nearly burned at the stake for suggesting otherwise. For centuries people in Europe believed the Earth was flat, and few explorers were so intrepid they would risk falling over its edge. For centuries western physicians believed that trepanning the skull and letting blood with leeches cured all sorts of disease, and for most of the 19th century they preached that women did not enjoy sex and that male masturbation depleted male vitality.

All these beliefs, which we now know to be false, were “known” to be true to their adherents. They were all based on fear and secured in place by fear, and they crippled people’s freedom to think as well as to act. As each prejudice was examined, however, the fears that underlay it were demystified and the truth, revealed, was clearly defined.

In order to define and demystify SM we must first examine the prejudices that underlie fears and apprehensions about it. It would be a monumental task to tackle all the false beliefs that people commonly hold about any form of sexuality, and so we’ve asked you to think a bit about the topic for yourself. Since our names are on this book, we’ll start you off by debunking a few of the most common myths, fears, and stereotypes about SM.

Erotic Theatre

SM does not necessarily replicate reality. Erotic fantasy enactment can, instead, be a form of participatory entertainment for adults. As in any other form of theatre, a successful scene requires certain kinds of consistency. Dressing in futuristic space-age garb would create dissonance in a Victorian Ladies' School caning session, just as playing military music would impose a jarring backdrop on a nurturing baby scene. Seen in this light, the activities of SM can be understood as erotic theatre.

As we will discuss at greater length later in this book, it is the Top's job to orchestrate the elements of an SM scene, which is why the Top is often compared to the director, and the bottom to an actor, in what amounts to an improvisational play. Costumes, lighting, location, music, atmosphere, and equipment are the physical components that contribute to the creation of an SM session, which we call—not by accident—a “scene” where people “play” in “roles.”

Fantasy Punishment & Real Punishment

Attitude and intent are the psychological components that illuminate any of the several purposes behind even a simple spanking scene. Where intent is concerned, for example, a Top might spank a bottom as part of a *training* scene designed to teach the bottom about the limits of pain that he can accept or the extent to which the Top likes to spank; a Top might spank a bottom who likes intense sensation as a *reward*; a Top might spank a bottom as a demonstration of *power*, as an experiential statement that he has the right to spank her; or a Top might spank a bottom as *punishment*.

Attitude, too, informs a scene's purpose and direction. The punishment in a punishment scene may be *real*, to take just one example, if the bottom has genuinely displeased the Top; or it may be *fantasy* if the bottom enjoys being “naughty” and the Top enjoys finding “reasons” to punish.

In a real punishment spanking the Top is likely to be very formal and strict, and to take a firm, no-nonsense approach, providing little in the way

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of warm-up or cool-down. In a reward or sensual spanking, on the other hand, the Top is likely to be kind and even affectionate, taking the bottom on a pleasurable physical journey. This kind of spanking may be fully as intense as any other sort, but it is generally delivered with affection, and includes a warm-up of milder sensations at the beginning and a cool-down at the end.

Although it is also consensual, a spanking designed to demonstrate the Top's power—"I spank you because I have the *right* to spank you, even if you're not pleased about being spanked right now"—can bring about a bottom's deep submission since it demands that she honor her agreement to place the Top's desires above her own: an agreement that goes to the very heart of consensual power exchange.

There is always danger in a Top's playing when she is really angry, since the powerful emotion can wrest control from her. If she is not in control of her feelings she may do damage: she may strike too hard or swing wildly and hit some place that should never be hit, such as her bottom's tailbone. Besides, if she is out of control emotionally, her bottom cannot safely be out of control as well: someone must remain in charge, and that is really the Top's responsibility and privilege. For all these reasons real punishment scenes are best executed after the Top has had a chance to calm down and can proceed with a level head. That way she can enjoy the scene, and the bottom can take the opportunity to learn not to do whatever created the need for punishment in the first place.

Certainly, if the bottom *likes* intense sensation, spanking will be an ineffective punishment that may leave the Top with a bottom who deliberately makes mistakes. But in any case brutality and excessive force never have a place in consensual SM. Quite often successful punishment can be effected through such mild means as the Top's emotional withdrawal, or standing the bottom in the corner of the room holding a penny to the wall with his nose, or having the bottom write 100 times, "I will not. . ." or "I will always. . ." Often it can be accomplished through denial of some favorite activity for a specific length of time, such as having no orgasms for a week.

Though all this talk of punishment may sound like pretty strict behavior modification, there is another component to it: we are all adults in the

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world of consensual SM, and we assume one another to be responsible. Therefore, we can understand and discuss among ourselves what we are seeking to learn and to do. Punishment, we know, doesn't work very well with children, prisoners, or other people who are forced to accept it against their wills, or who are bullied into taking it without their consent. But punishment may work very well indeed when the person being punished has the capacity to know its purposes, supports those ends, and has consented to its practice to further them.

Fantasy punishment is an altogether different scene. There is no *real* error to correct: punishment just happens to be a scenario both Top and bottom like to play with, so the Top finds fault with the bottom's posture, phrasing, or failure to follow some impossible command, such as an order to kneel while tied standing to the wall. A fantasy punishment scene may *look* just like a real punishment scene, but it is accompanied by the good-natured irony that underscores SM's theatricality. The bottom may protest like a lamb at the slaughter, but she would be truly unhappy only if the Top did not follow through.

Pain & Violence, Abuse & Consent

There's a scene in David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* in which T. E. Lawrence, portrayed by Peter O'Toole, holds his hand in a candle flame before pinching out the wick. "Doesn't it hurt?" asks his companion. "Of course it hurts," Lawrence replies. "The trick is not *minding* that it hurts."

The sensations we recognize as pain are designed by our bodies to be taken as warning signals by our brains so that we can fight, flee, or otherwise save ourselves from danger. But we do not have to live as slaves to our biological programming. Once we know that some particular pain does not really represent a danger to us, we no longer *have* to counter or avoid the sensation if, for some reason, we do not choose to do so: we begin to have some freedom of choice regarding our responses to what really is just an intense sensation. But while we may exercise to build our bodies, repeating with every set of reps, "no pain, no gain," we still react with the instincts of self-preservation when we stub our toes or catch our

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fingers against the jamb of a closing door.

Pretend for a moment that you're a doctor, and a man comes to your office to have you treat his broken leg.

"How'd you break the leg, Charlie?" you ask.

"Football game," he answers, wincing as you examine the break. "I went out long and my buddy Steve just tagged me."

You set the bone and it heals, and Charlie is fine.

But six months later Charlie is back again, this time with a smashed finger.

"What happened, Charlie?" you inquire.

"Football again," he replies. "I was holding the snap and I didn't get my hand out of the way fast enough when Tom kicked the ball."

You put his finger in a splint and in a few weeks Charlie is fine again.

But three months later Charlie is brought in on a stretcher with what turns out to be a concussion.

"What happened this time, Charlie?" you ask.

"Football," he says in a blurry voice. "That new guy, Frank, has a really mean block, and I just got hit."

As a responsible physician you'll probably advise Charlie to be a bit more careful in his game, but you're not likely to suggest that's he's emotionally disturbed, or that he should stop playing football*—and if you did, Charlie might well think you were overstepping your bounds: he likes to play ball, it's good exercise, it's a chance to unwind with his friends, and, well, you take a few risks to have a good time in life.

Now imagine the same set of scenarios, but each time Charlie comes to your office the reason he gives for his bruises and scrapes is that he likes to be whipped, or he likes rough sex. Now do you think he's in need of psychotherapy to cure what ails him? Now would you suggest he stop doing what he enjoys?

In our society we have some peculiar attitudes toward sex, and particularly toward sexual behaviors and activities someone else told us were bad and wrong. Since, until the mid-1980s, nearly the entire range

*If you object to football on some ground, substitute figure skating, bowling, or some other challenging and consensual activity you prefer.

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of literature available about SM was made up of misinformed pornography and equally misinformed psychological theory, the range of our prejudice about it should come as no surprise. Uneducated pornographers, misinformed psychologists, and ignorant legislators have contributed to a popular notion that SM is or is tantamount to abuse. But abuse occurs when at least one party to an action doesn't want to participate in some activity and is compelled or coerced into it anyway, or when a person such as a young child gives consent he is really incapable of giving because he does not understand what he is consenting to. One of the fundamental principles of SM as we understand it is that it *is* consensual. For an activity to be consensual all participants must have agreed to it; consensuality implies not only that they are conscious of what they are going to do, but also that they are competent to give their consent.

Although some people dislike having their erotic pleasures associated with the activities the Marquis de Sade and Gustav von Sacher-Masoch wrote about, consensual sadomasochism still is the generally accepted term for a complex group of behaviors that involve intense sensation and/or intense mental discipline. Since the behaviors are erotic, people who engage in them usually find them sexually stimulating; since the activities are consensual, everyone involved must have agreed to engage in them, and to be capable of making such an agreement. Children do not engage in consensual sadomasochism because they are not capable—legally if not psychologically—of giving consent; adults who are coerced into these or other activities have also not consented.

Whether consent is construed as a psychological or a legal matter, it underlies everything we've written in this book. As a psychotherapist and a sex educator, as a man and a woman, and simply as human beings, we are deeply opposed to nonconsensual behavior: to any activity in which people participate against their wills, or in which they are persuaded to engage—or to refrain from engaging—without having access to information that might alter their desires to participate, whether that activity concerns war, sex, religion, or eating. When one person is abused we are all abused.

In part it is precisely consensuality that enables us to distinguish between activities we regard as abusive and those we regard as traumatic. When soldiers kill each other in war we understand that at least they knew

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what they were getting into when they put on their uniforms and picked up their guns. Whether we like it or not, and whether we approve of war or not, the soldiers consented to the dangers of their profession. When civilians are killed on our city streets we rightly call it murder: they did not consent to this sort of danger.

We make the same distinction with commonplace sexual intercourse, which we call sex when it is consensual, and rape when it is not. And for the purposes of this book we make the same distinction between forms of SM that may look to outsiders like physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, and abuse that is the real thing. Many dictionaries define violence in terms of an event's or an action's intensity—a violent hurricane is identified by winds that are unusually strong even for that sort of storm, a violent headache by how much it hurts rather than by the nature of the pain or by how long it continues. But violence in the human realm may be better understood by the effects of a behavior or the intention behind it. In general, the purpose of violence is to cause nonconsensual physical or psychological harm or damage to someone or something. Someone may be violent regardless of sex, gender, size, age, political agenda, social status, profession, or SM role. People who become violent with sex, play, or domestic partners frequently do so as a means of forcing or intimidating the partners to accept behaviors to which the partner has not consented. Violence is usually motivated by a desire to avenge real or imagined slights or offenses, and fueled by feelings of anger, hostility, or fear, whether those feelings are acknowledged consciously or not. Once begun, violence often recurs in cycles, and escalates in severity.

As we said a few pages ago, we are all adults in the world of consensual SM, and we assume one another to be responsible. Nonetheless, violence occurs in the SM community as it occurs everywhere else, and abuse does sometimes masquerade as SM.

If someone is involved in a great many real punishment scenes; if a Top often plays when angry; if a bottom can never please a Top and is frequently in some sort of unhappy trouble; if a Top wants to be in complete control all the time and a bottom, displeased with this situation, goes along with it anyway; if a bottom often manipulates a Top in order to get attention of some sort: all these are signs of the kind of trouble that can provoke the

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anger that can lead to violence. Then what looks like consensual SM may become something very different. It may become something that happens, as the recovery movement reminds us, in the dark, in isolation: without witnesses or the possibility of intervention. Human violence, we reiterate, is nonconsensual and *intends* to harm: that is part of what makes it true abuse.

The first hallmark of abuse is that something is happening between or among people that is not negotiated and is nonconsensual and unpleasant for at least one party. Apart from the SM-specific behaviors we mentioned in the paragraph above, certain types of behavior are signs that abuse is probably taking place in SM, as they are elsewhere. For instance,

- if one partner physically hurts or restrains another against her will outside a consensually negotiated scene;
- if a partner intentionally, consistently, or repeatedly violates negotiated limits in *or* outside a scene;
- if one partner forces or coerces another to do things the second partner has not clearly agreed to do, including but not limited to sexual acts;
- if one partner feels trapped in a role or relationship and cannot extricate himself because of another partner's behavior;
- if one partner isolates another from family, friends, community, or free associations with other people;
- if one partner belittles, demeans, or ridicules another outside a scene specifically negotiated to involve humiliation or consensual nonconsent, or attempts to undermine her self-esteem, especially regarding limits she has set for herself;

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- if one partner steals from another, or withholds food, money, or other goods outside a negotiated scene;
- if one partner damages, destroys, or threatens the property of another, including pets; or harms or threatens friends or family of another;
- if one partner becomes afraid of another with cause.

Top, bottom, or switch, no one has the right to abuse another. People do sometimes elect to remain in abusive relationships or situations, but even when it is disguised as love or altruism, or acknowledged as a form of co-dependency, their motive is usually fear, such as the fear that the abuse will only get worse when the abuser learns of the abused partner's wish to leave, or fear of real or imagined financial, material, or emotional hardship that may follow a separation.

Abuse is never pleasant, and it can be emotionally crippling and physically dangerous—even fatal. If you believe you are in an abusive situation and feel you cannot leave, seek help from any abuse survivor's network in your area. If you don't know of such a network, start with any hospital, clinic, crisis or self-help hotline you can reach, including Suicide Prevention, and follow their suggestions until you get the help you need. If you are in an actively violent situation, call 911 for emergency assistance.

Self-Esteem

One reason some people subject themselves to abuse is that they believe they deserve it, or don't believe they deserve better. This belief is not always conscious, and it is not always what the people would say they believe about themselves, but sometimes what people *do*—the patterns in the ways we live our lives—speaks more eloquently than what we say.

It's easy to become acquainted with the SM stereotypes of low self-esteem, since they're what much bad SM porn (and bad SM press) is based on: the groveling bottom who regards himself as a lowly worm and

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believes he deserves nothing more than to be hurt and used as someone's doormat; the sneering Top who lives behind a stoic, aloof, or cynical mask, unable to acknowledge the fear, tenderness, and other vulnerable sides to his human nature.

Real people fully embody these sorts of stereotypes only rarely, if for no other reason than that they're difficult to sustain in daily life. But many people, SM players and vanilla folk alike, have some small facet of these sides to their personalities. Just as there is real abuse in the SM world, as well as in mainstream society, so also there are real self-esteem issues among SM players as well as among the populace at large.

It isn't a sin, a crime, or a disease to have low self-esteem: it's a problem in living that most people experience from time to time, at least as bouts of self-doubt during periods of severe stress or emotional upheaval. For some people low self-esteem is chronic: a nearly constant fear or belief that they are just not good enough—either for some particular task, role, or partner, or as a general state of being. Whether chronic or transient, however, low self-esteem is never enjoyable; it limits a person's freedom and joy in life whether she finds her pleasures in SM, horse racing, child rearing, or all three. Most therapists and other people in the helping professions know various techniques and strategies by which even chronic low self-esteem can be raised to some extent, and people whose value goes up in their own eyes usually feel better about themselves, and frequently live more satisfying and productive lives as well.

Sometimes a person who is coming out in SM experiences low self-esteem for reasons that are specific to her situation. After all, it is not uncommon to feel confused when we find that our wants and needs differ from the expressed values of the society in which we live. One cause of such confusion is that someone neglects to distinguish between what she wants in the uniquely focused erotic theatre of SM and what she wants in the more broadly-based world that includes her job, her friends, her family, and the evening news, because what's awkward or dangerous to want in our usual lives may well be pleasing and even highly desirable in the dungeon. We've all grown up in a society that tells us we are not supposed to hit people we love, for example, nor are we supposed to allow ourselves to be hit by the ones we love: isn't that what domestic abuse is

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frequently about? Yet, in a negotiated, consensual SM scene we may hit or be hit most intensely by the person we love best in all the world—and say thank you for the opportunity afterwards.

Whatever this implies about us and our self-esteem, it does not mean that we think poorly of ourselves, or can't find love in any other way, or are collections of rabid psychopaths champing to be released from our little private hells. The person who finds delight in being treated as a lapdog now and then may simply like to be petted and cuddled without having to do anything except loll his tongue: the experience of being cherished can be hard to find in much of modern life. Alternatively, the person may have discovered some rare strength or value in his psychological makeup that being treated as a pet brings out in him. Many pre-Industrial societies understood that people share characteristics with other animals, that there is no such thing as an inherently bad animal, and that every animal has its own special traits. A chief called Sitting Bull may have been known for his grounded, stolid, earthy nature; a warrior may have been called Crazy Horse to honor his powerful intuition in battle. What strengths, powers, and values might inhere in being known as Lap Dog?

Because submission can be a charged issue in our relatively aggressive social order, women sometimes wonder how they can reconcile being submissive with being feminists, as men sometimes wonder how they can reconcile themselves to being submissive in a world that seems to demand dominance from males. (Other women may fear that being dominant will conflict with their desires to appear feminine, and other men may wonder how to be dominant without seeming arrogant, but these questions more rarely have to do with self-esteem.)

In order to answer those questions it is important to know, first, what a person means by "submissive." Does he mean that he does what his Top says in a scene, or does he mean he likes to get done? Is he a submissive bottom ("I'll serve you as you wish me to") or a submissive Top ("Which crop should I hit you with? That one? Okay.")? If a bottom, does he submit willingly, or is he a rebel? In any case, is he submissive 24 hours a day, or does he occupy a subordinate role only for the duration of a scene? Does he submit to a special someone, to any or many people who negotiate with him, or to the universe at large?

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Clearly, there is a difficulty inherent in defining actions by labels; that difficulty becomes more obvious when we seek to define “feminist.” Andrea Dworkin claims that title, and she has lobbied actively to ban SM, pornography, and most male-female erotic activity you have ever imagined, let alone enjoyed. The former Pat Califia was also referred to as a feminist, but her books, such as *Macho Sluts* and *Doc and Fluff*, include female Tops, female bottoms, male Tops, and male bottoms, variously dominant and submissive, all playing with one another and many switching roles and partners in remarkable and often unexpected combinations. Cynthia Slater, the founder of the Society of Janus, certainly thought of herself as a feminist, and she was a bisexual switch: she was interested in the energy exchange, not the label. In one perhaps apocryphal story either Pat or Cynthia, depending on who tells the tale, was dressed in a high-necked white lace Victorian gown while in Top mode for a party. A horrified guest, expecting her to be in heavy black leather, objected, “Tops don’t wear white lace!” To which Pat or Cynthia is supposed to have replied, “Tops wear anything they want to wear.”

The same position is useful for SM feminists. As we see it, feminists do what they want to do in their sex lives. The key is that *they* want to. Feminism is not defined by what someone does in bed: feminism is defined by what a person does in her head—and in the voting booth, the planning committee meeting, the workplace, and sometimes in the streets.

People can be bound to some extent by their assumptions about definitions, and so they may be freed somewhat by thinking about their behavior instead. For example, engaging in submissive *behavior* for erotic pleasure is not the same as *being* a submissive. It is, instead, a way to enjoy oneself, or to meet one’s erotic needs or desires—just as engaging in dominant behavior is a way for someone else to get what she wants, or for the same person to get what she wants at some other time, with some other person, or in some other set of circumstances.

Nor does engaging in submissive behavior for erotic pleasure imply that one is submissive or engages in submissive behavior for any other reason: professional dominatrices have frequently said that their clients include many high-powered people who are extremely dominant in their professional and social lives, and who simply need a break from being in charge.

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Questions about submission are very closely tied to questions about self-esteem because they frequently imply that being submissive means a person has no power. But this is a notion we dispute. No one can give up power he doesn't already have, so the more power a person has, the more he can give up, and, consequently, the more empowering his submission can be. Speaking only for ourselves, when we Top we don't want to play with people who think badly of themselves: we want someone's bottoming to be a worthy gift. Similarly, when we bottom we give a great deal: a Top who can't recognize that gift is not likely to be able to receive all we have to offer, nor is she likely to be able to give much back to us.

This is also why submission can actually *build* an individual's personal power: through genuine submission a person can realize how much he has to give and how valuable it is; can realize that he is able to control himself enough to give it away when and how he chooses to and not at other times; can realize that he is able to master his own will to give that power up the way his Top wants it instead of the way he thinks his Top *should* want it; and can realize whole new levels of pride in who and what he is—not the false pride of an inflated ego, but the true pride that, like humility, comes from knowing the depths of one's self.

The mainstream world in which dominance is demanded from a male is not a world that recognizes the value of females or feminine components in males; nor does it value the traditionally receptive qualities inherent in submission, service, or surrender. As a result, we who live in this world are always, to some extent, cut off from others, and from essential parts of ourselves as well. When we discover the strength that can come from gracefully turning our power over to another, we can also discover the limits stereotypes impose on us, and the freedom that lies in living for our experience rather than our labels.

We're not taught in our society to be gracious about serving: we're taught that it's menial and even demeaning. But submissive service is the ideal that underlies chivalry: being and doing your very best for the pleasure and honor of someone you esteem. Neither are we taught to be gracious and humble when served, so to cover our awkward embarrassment we become haughty and distant when offered respect; we are mean to our servants, thereby robbing ourselves as well as them of the intimacy devotion entails.

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When politics is as anti-sexual as it is throughout the power blocs of the modern world, very few sexual activities—let alone sexual fantasies—are politically correct. So we don't mean that someone's fantasy to be a useless worm trod upon by some contemptuous bitch or brute should not be valued as highly as any other, nor that such a scene cannot be hot. We do mean that sex is not politics (however politicized sexuality may become), that fantasy and reality are different realities (yes, we said that), and that it behooves us all to distinguish between them.

Juicy Lucy had a very useful observation about the process of consensual SM that was published in the undisputably feminist lesbian SM manifesto, "If I Ask You to Tie Me Up, Will You Still Want to Love Me?" in the Samois anthology *Coming to Power* listed in our Bibliography. She wrote,

Sadist & masochist are terms I have a schizophrenic reaction to. When & how I use these terms changes depending on the context & on who I'm with. In a sexual context sadist & masochist are roles that define erotic poles of power & have meanings of passion trust & intensity that flow from a fully consensual situation. . . . I also use the terms top & bottom to describe the two basic power positions in S/M. . . . The exchange is: sadist/top/dominant/sender flowing into masochist/bottom/passive/receiver. However, it is an oversimplification to talk about the erotic exchange as though it only flowed one way. Each side has many levels of apparent & actual power. In sexual S/M the exchange is mutual, with both sides giving & receiving erotic intensity. For example, the trust/openness of the bottom is a constant turn-on to the top, even though it's the bottom who's being had. The power & erotic exchange always flows full circle. If it doesn't then it's not satisfying & the satisfaction of all concerned is a prime goal in S/M. . . . Heal & be healed. Spirit surround you.

What is SM?

So if it is not abuse or violence and it is not coercive, even though with its grand flourishes it may look like or even present itself as any or all of these, what is SM? It is a highly dramatic and sophisticated form of erotic theatre, requiring the consent of all participants and expressing its drama through physical and psychological intensity that is consensual, erotic, and fun.

Defining and Demystifying the Language

The Language of SM

Back in the 1980s Sybil was discussing her interest in SM with a friend who was an ardent animal rights activist. As the friend knew nothing about SM and wanted to learn, Sybil recommended one of the few books available at the time, Samois's *Coming to Power*. A few weeks later the woman called to report on her research. "I find this all fascinating," she said, "but tell me— please: you don't really hit each other with *cats*, do you?"

Of course, we *do* hit each other with cats—but not the four-legged furry kind. If you are unfamiliar with the meaning of "cat" in an SM context look it up in the Glossary on page 61, below.

Every activity from baseball to politics has its own special language: words and phrases that practitioners and aficionados use and understand, which may confuse, mislead, or even alarm outsiders. Although the language of consensual sadomasochism varies depending on geographic locale and the set and experience of the people involved, definition provides a critical basis for communication: understanding what *you* mean by a few dozen words that are central to this erotic activity will make it far easier for you to discuss SM with others, even if their definitions are different from yours. Here are the terms we believe are central in this way; our versions of their definitions can be found in the Glossary on page 57, at the end of this chapter.

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SM
BD
DS
BDSM

Top
Dominant
Sadist

Bottom
Submissive
Masochist

Switch
Fetish/Fetishist

Limits
Safeword
Straight time

A few other terms and concepts that are less universally understood or accepted than the ones listed above, and are less common than many other terms in the Glossary, are nonetheless important enough to warrant special attention, since knowing them can further smooth your way as you learn, play, and communicate about SM. Our discussions of them follow.

Top's Disease, Bottom's Disease, & Topping from the Bottom

You won't find Top's disease in *Dorland's Medical Dictionary*, but you can find it almost anyplace large groups of SM players congregate—especially among new dominants, and most especially among some new female *Professional* Dominants who are not in a leather community and have no context in which to understand their clients' offerings and

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submission. All new dominants are susceptible to Top's disease because the first rush of erotic power is so intoxicating it feels almost like a drug, and often goes to someone's head. If, in addition, a woman who is new to the scene and has no access to its community, or chooses not to avail herself of the community that does exist, hangs out her shingle as a Pro-Domme and finds men calling her Goddess and throwing themselves and their money at her feet all week, she risks having an SM life that has no balance. If she has no straight time in which everyone is equal, it becomes very easy to believe her own press.

For the pro or the non-pro of any sex, Top's disease starts with the belief that because she *is* a Top she should be in charge all the time. She begins to act like a Top nonconsensually, with people who have not agreed to bottom to her. She is always in role and demands that people call her Mistress all the time (or he demands that people call him Master: though new female professionals are *most* susceptible, no new Top is altogether immune). She may believe that all Tops are better than all bottoms, or that all women are superior to all men (or, again, vice-versa). Her social behavior may become pushy and arrogant.

In its extreme form Top's disease leads to acting as if one is in charge of everyone and everything 24 hours a day, whether or not others have agreed with that assessment. Top's disease really amounts to nonconsensual domineering or—not to put too fine a point on it—bullying.

Top's disease generally seems to us to spring from the same place kids' playground bullying or any other sort of bullying comes from: insecurity, uncertainty about who one is in the world, and a kind of damaged self-esteem that demands ego defenses other people will find difficult or simply unpleasant to try to penetrate. But whatever its psychological origins may be, you will have a happier life with or without SM if you keep yourself free of its ravages.

You will also find your SM life to be happier if you keep people with Top's disease from annoying you. If you have an encounter with such a person it is entirely proper to gently inform her that you have not agreed to be her bottom. And if someone ever accuses you of showing signs of Top's disease, consider the accusation carefully. If you determine the claim is inaccurate, ponder why it came to be made in the first place. And if you

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believe you've been accurately found out, apologize and be more careful in the future.

As you might imagine, there is a corresponding concern for some people, known as "bottom's disease." People bottom for all sorts of reasons, but bottoms who believe they are really inferior to Tops, or who believe all Tops are superior to all bottoms all the time, have lost sight of, or else have never understood, the gift that true submission is. To choose to turn over power in your own life to someone else is not only to make a gift of yourself: as we noted earlier, in the section on Self-Esteem, it is also a tacit acknowledgement that you have that power to give away in the first place, since you can't give away what you don't already possess.

In its extreme form bottom's disease leads to acting as if one has no responsibility for one's own behavior or well-being, or even for one's own life, simply because one self-defines as a bottom. People with bottom's disease may believe they can't or have no right to say No, or that they should provide for a Top anything the Top wants. They may play beyond their limits or play unsafely if they are told to do so. Especially when bottoms seem more plentiful than Tops, people with bottom's disease may play unselectively, as if otherwise they will never have a chance to play at all. Like Top's disease, bottom's disease generally reflects low self-esteem and seems to be another way to cope with insecurity and uncertainty about who one is, both internally and in the world.

Since bottom's disease often amounts to nonconsensual servility—such as when a bottom in a bar or at a party falls at the feet of some Top he's never even been properly introduced to—it can be insidiously connected to "Topping from the bottom," which is a way some people covertly try to run a scene from bottom space.

SAMs & SASS

Sometimes in a scene a bottom wants more sensation, more discipline, more attention, more, more, more. Instead of making a polite request—"If it pleases you, Sir, you *could* spank me a little harder"—the bottom acts covertly, trying to manipulate the Top by doing or saying something that will be provocative. The bottom who wants more sensation and acts like

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a brat in order to be disciplined is known as a SAM or a Smart-Assed Masochist. The bottom who wants more mental control and steps out of line in order to be reined in is called a SAS or a Smart-Assed Submissive. The entire process of trying to manipulate the person who is supposed to be in charge is part of Topping from the bottom.

This is not to say the most submissive bottom cannot relax, be funny and entertaining, tell jokes, and otherwise be himself. The limits of his appropriate behavior depend on the nature of the Top, the context of the scene, the nature of that scene, and the relationship between the players. Some Tops love SAMs and SASs: they enjoy the bantering, intellectual challenge these bottoms can present, as well as the opportunity to bully the bottom who relishes that sort of response.

Other Tops loathe this sort of exchange: they see it as an affront to their role and dignity, and regard casual, playful behavior as undesirable in a bottom. Neither Sybil nor Bill is a bully as a Top; neither of us likes having to prove our positions constantly. On the other hand, we both enjoy bottoms with some personality, who can be witty and engaging when the circumstances are right. As a bottom Bill does not regard himself as a SAM or a SAS, but he appreciates—and, in a long scene, expects—the opportunity to be a full human being.

Years ago we developed a system of *short leash/long leash*. *Short leash* signifies a tight, formal role, with a highly focused scene including strict rules to follow, in which jokes, wisecracks, and sloppiness are not welcome. *Long leash* signifies a scene in the midst of life in the mundane world, working, shopping, hanging out with family and/or with friends, in which jokes, teasing, and banter were valued as appropriate contributions to the discourse. *Very long leash* signifies an ongoing scene that might look like straight time from the outside but includes the undercurrent of power exchange in which the Top always has the right to shorten the leash and tighten up the scene.

It is the intention of the submissive's comments rather than their specific content that usually distinguishes an entertaining submissive from a SAS or a SAM. Clear, direct requests for privilege or relief—"Please, Ma'am, if it pleases you, will you whip me harder?"—are generally a bottom's prerogative, unless he and his Top have a different agreement.

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But comments from a bottom that are *indirectly* focused on his own pleasure rather than the Top's—"I guess you can't whip very hard, can you, Sir?"—are examples of Topping from the bottom.

Whether he's an entertaining individual or a SAS, a witty bottom may or may not be conscious of what he's doing, and may or may not be amenable to changing his behavior through training or self-reflection. But the focus of such a submissive's banter is—or should be—the Top's delight and entertainment. We have known relatively few people who enjoyed the practices of erotic power exchange who wanted to wrestle—literally or figuratively—for command of a scene or a relationship. Most Tops and bottoms agree on their roles in part because a power struggle is precisely what they do not want.

The one place the *form* of Topping from the bottom can work to everybody's benefit is in a scene between a novice Top and an experienced masochist. In this time-honored situation experience is given its due: as teacher the bottom walks the novice through her paces, advising her on procedure and protocol, and anticipating and helping to solve the sorts of technical problems that are liable to arise. In a scene like this the person who is nominally the Top is really acting as a middle—someone who is simultaneously submissive to the Top, and under his instruction dominant over the bottom—while the bottom, in effect, is her own Top. When we speak of Topping from the bottom we ordinarily refer to more or less conscious manipulations by a bottom to take back power he has agreed to give away. Because a scene such as the one we're discussing in this paragraph is consensual and consciously directed to a specific, mutually-agreed-upon purpose, it is not really Topping from the bottom in any way but form.

Dominant Masochists & Submissive Sadists

Some people enjoy very intense sensation, but are not submissive in the least. In the early days of the organized SM community, and in some places even today, such a person is regarded as a bad slave or a

bad bottom. But perhaps she's not a slave or a bottom at all, but rather a Dominant Masochist. Sybil, who is primarily a Top, sometimes wants the sensation or the release of tension that can accompany a whipping, caning, or piercing, and sees no reason to deny herself these pleasures because someone else has different notions of what a Top should do. In this capacity she usually plays with a woman who identifies as a submissive sadist and who likes to do her Top exactly the way the Top likes to be done. For their mutual pleasure Sybil collars the woman and directs the scene, requiring the sadist to beg to administer pain; sometimes Sybil says Yes—and sometimes No.

Infantilists & Fetishists

Tops who play with age regression may also find themselves in the curious position of submitting to the demands of their bottoms because, after all, however passive, dependent, and needy one may be, there really is no such thing as a submissive baby. In fact, a real baby *can't* be submissive: it is still utterly the center of its own universe and knows no other way to be. It has not yet developed enough sense of itself to have the capacity to give up power and control over that self. Adult babies, on the other hand, sometimes have a substantial sense of self, and therefore have the capacity to relinquish control over that self. But often they have to be taught to be submissive because, like real babies, they also want to be the center of the universe.

An infantilist is a fetishist, and like all fetishists has a speciality. A fetishist is someone whose erotic attraction for a particular object, body part, or behavior is so important that an erotic encounter without that fetish is not satisfactory. Many fetishists believe they are submissive because they imagine themselves in a submissive posture, such as kneeling and adoring at someone's feet. It may turn out, however, that the supposed submissive has little or no interest in bottoming or even in the *person* at whose feet he is so eagerly worshipping. He may simply be concerned with the feet themselves—and then only if those feet are bare, with a high arch and long red toenails.

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In the erotic world of consensual SM there is nothing inherently wrong with fetishes or with being a fetishist, although in its extreme forms fetishism can be restricting. First, if you *are* a fetishist and claim or believe you are submissive, you may find yourself engaged in repetitive power struggles with Tops who take you at your word and expect you to serve and obey them. Second, as a fetishist you may find your opportunities for gratification are both limited and limiting. If you can expand your repertoire from one fetish to several or even many, or if you can include your fetish in a larger context of play or relational activities, you stand a good chance of increasing your pleasures, both erotically and otherwise.

Lifestyle DS

By now you may wonder where SM fits into your life, or if it fits in at all. You may be a novice; you may be, or be on your way to becoming, an advanced player; your life may include SM simply as fantasy, or as an occasional consensual foreplay spanking, some slap-and-tickle while fucking, or some other periodic exchange of erotic energy in the bedroom. Or you may find yourself living or wanting to live an SM lifestyle.

“SM lifestyle” means different things to different people. For some people an SM lifestyle means living a life whose style includes having self-identified SM players as friends, visiting stores and clubs known to be friendly to SM and SM players, and participating in SM events on a regular basis. For others the phrase means that SM play or the SM scene is a significant feature of their personal or public lives. And for still others the phrase should really be “lifestyle DS,” since they are not necessarily referring to the larger SM scene at all, but to a complete lifestyle based on the intense emotional exchanges of dominance and submission. By “lifestyle DS” they mean living in role as Master or Mistress and slave, pet, or other property full time, all the time, in or out of an organized SM community.

For some people to whom lifestyle DS implies permanent role, at least as long as the SM relationship lasts, the phrase sometimes goes by the code “24/7”: the people involved live their roles in relationship to one another 24 hours a day, seven days a week, even as they recognize that their

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consensual arrangement might not be sanctioned by the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which prohibits (nonconsensual) slavery.

Very few people live this form of full-time lifestyle DS, and for the most part SM authors don't really write about it either, except in fiction: we write instead about erotic play within the context of a friendship, romance, or other relationship that is otherwise pretty much like the non-DS relationships of its time, place, and socio-economic class. But the full-time lifestyle dream drives many players' erotic engines, as one of the most extreme of all SM fantasies.

We say this form of lifestyle DS is extreme because full-time role is extremely difficult. It is not nearly as easy as some would-be slaves imagine, for example, to genuinely relinquish control over one's entire life, allowing another person to determine when, how, and whether you may work, play, sleep, dress, eat, drink, orgasm, evacuate, speak, and so forth. Nor is it nearly as easy as some would-be Masters believe to be fully and honorably responsible for another adult human life, especially since—fantasy notwithstanding—Tops *don't* always get what they want, and few have their own lives so well in order that they *can* direct another's. For such reasons, most successful relationships we have known among SM or DS players were those that *included* some form of erotic power exchange, rather than relationships that were *based* in erotic power exchange.

It *is* possible to live the 24/7 life—if: if both partners understand themselves and each other well, if they understand what they're asking for and letting themselves in for, if they are willing and able to ride out the rough patches together, and if no major surprises throw them off their chosen course. Some people who live 24/7 successfully do so within one or another of the SM communities, where they may find considerable support; others do so on their own, far from any SM group, where even their closest friends know little or nothing about their private passions.

But couples who live successful full-time DS lifestyles in either way are few and far between. Most players who have the 24/7 fantasy exercise it most satisfactorily in relatively long scenes lasting a weekend or even a week or more. This is one place the concept of *long leash/short leash* can be applied, which we discussed on page 54, in our section on SAMs and

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SASSs. Even people who want a full-time, 24/7 lifestyle may not be able to have it: Masters as well as pets may have children or parents to care for; Mistresses as well as slaves may have to earn a living. As a consequence, a committed 24/7 lifestyle DS couple may live most of their lives together with a very long leash indeed, and only live with the short leash they'd prefer on episodic weekends or other vacation time.

Occasional lengthy, short-leash scenes may satisfy a great deal of fantasy desire for people who cannot live a DS lifestyle more intensely for any number of reasons. After all, as we'll discuss at greater length in our section on negotiation, on page 81, people's extreme fantasies tell us all about the directions we would like to take, and even if reality compels us to draw limits around our fondest and most exciting wishes, we can still enjoy a taste of what they're like. Whether that taste satisfies the yearnings our fantasies point out, or, more rarely, whets our appetites for a more complete experience, no one can really say in advance.

One frequent fear of novices and SM outsiders is that once a person begins to play she will never want or be able to turn back, and will slide farther and farther into some wretched slough of despond. The truth, of course, is that in SM as in baseball, corporate finance, and watercolor painting, everyone finds his own comfort level, which depends on desire, ability, opportunity, and myriad personal factors. Some people do go through a few months of immersion at the start of their serious explorations when they submerge themselves in their new hobby, buy lots of toys and clothes, and go to every possible play party and leather event until they reach a stage of overload or mild burn-out. But even these people generally calm down and level out soon thereafter, selling toys they didn't really need to other players, and attending only those events that really interest them.

A full-time DS relationship may not even look like what it is. A dear friend of ours, a Top and Master in every best sense of the words, once owned a precious and devoted slave. As far as anyone could tell, the two loved each other for who they were as individuals, as well as for the way they played the roles of their very intense relationship together. In the best DS traditions the slave served his Master while his Master took care of him.

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After awhile the slave became extremely ill, and in time he died. During his decline his Master fed and bathed him, saw that he made his doctors' appointments and medication schedules, and in every way saw to his property's comfort and happiness. To someone peeking through a keyhole the Master might well have looked like the slave, the slave like a well-attended Master. The truth was quite different, and the business of no one but the couple, even though their community friends knew quite well what was going on.

The point of this story is this: whatever approach you may take to your SM and DS, whether you choose some form of SM lifestyle or simply indulge your fantasies from time to time, your greatest potential for pleasure lies in remaining as flexible as you can. That way you are least likely to get locked into a label, and most likely to enjoy your activities, your partners, and yourself.

An SM Glossary

The following definitions are not necessarily from Webster, and may even vary from one geographic locale to another. The language of SM is in process; it is still evolving. Our definitions are specifically intended to address behaviors, concepts, roles, and equipment as embodied, expressed, and used in consensual SM as we know it. Italicized words or phrases within definitions are also defined in the Glossary.

Abrasion — rubbing the surface of the skin to heighten sensation; see also *local torture*.

Advanced techniques — techniques that require training from a qualified, experienced teacher, such as *piercing*, *cutting*, and *fisting*.

Aftercare — the ordinarily comforting attention one player (usually, but not always, the Top) provides for another (usually, but not always, the bottom) after a scene, especially when the scene has been intense.

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Age play — the eroticization of acting or treating another person as if younger (or, more rarely, older) than your, her, or his chronological age.

Animal play — the eroticization of acting or treating another as if you, she, or he are/is an animal (e.g., a dog, horse, etc.); see also *training*.

Ass play — erotic activity involving the buttocks or—especially— the anus.

BD — (B/D, B & D, Bondage and Discipline) combining the restraint of movement with the punishment and/or control of partner.

BDSM — a single collection of overlapping initials intended to identify three components of erotic power play—*BD*, *DS*, and *SM*—at once. This composite originated in the computer world.

Backlash — feelings of regret, disgust, sadness, anger, fear, etc., hours or days after participating willingly and happily in an *SM scene*.

Ball gag — round ball, usually made of rubber, that fits in the mouth, attached to a strap that fastens around the head.

Blindfold — eye covering.

Birch — bundle of twigs, originally from a birch tree, used since Victorian times for flagellation, which is known in this context as “birching.”

Blood sports — deliberately breaking the skin in *SM* play; can be done by *cutting*, *piercing*, *whipping*, or using medical blood-drawing equipment; also, *vampire games*. These are generally considered *advanced techniques*, not novice activities.

Body modification — altering the shape or appearance of the body, e.g., tattooing, *piercing*, *corset training*; may be erotic or may be part of a *Master's* or a *Mistress's* claim on a *pet* or *slave*, but may also be for tribal identification; not restricted to *SM*.

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Bondage — binding for restriction or sensation, as in *suspension*, *sensory deprivation*, *mummification*, etc.; done with leather, rope, metal, dental floss, plastic wrap, elastic bandages, harnesses, body weight, etc.; also, psychological restraint.

Bottom — umbrella term for the person in the scene who takes the *submissive*, *receptive*, or *masochistic* role.

Bottom space — emotional and psychological condition of being under (see *going under*); corollary to *Top space*.

Bottom's disease — nonconsensual servility; acting as if one has no responsibility and/or self-esteem because one is a *bottom*; believing that all *Tops* are superior to all bottoms.

Branding — marking the skin for erotic and/or decorative purposes with a hot brand; may also signify ownership, or a rite of passage. This is an *advanced technique* and should not be undertaken without intense personal investigation.

Breath control — erotic pleasure derived from controlling someone's access to air, or having one's own access to air controlled. This **extremely** dangerous activity—people can suffocate and die, have heart attacks, or suffer irreversible brain damage very quickly—is avoided even by many experienced players, and should NEVER be undertaken without **intense** personal research and relevant medical training.

Brown showers (BS) — using feces (scat) in an erotic context. For reasons of psychological and physical health, this extreme, sophisticated practice is not a *novice* activity.

Butt plug — a toy intended to be inserted into the rectum that is basically a rounded Christmas-tree or lava-lamp shape, flaring toward its base and then abruptly narrowing so it can be held in place by the anal sphincters. For safe use a butt plug must have a flange too wide for the anus to

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accommodate, so it can neither slip nor be pushed entirely into the body, and should be entirely sheathed in a condom in case the flange breaks off.

C & B (T) — cock and ball (torture); intense stimulation – not necessarily painful – of the male genitals.

Cane — flexible rod of rattan, bamboo, plastic, Teflon®, etc., used to strike the body.

Caning — use of a *cane*. Because canes are thin, caning is often more intense, and leaves more pronounced marks, than a *novice* might anticipate; approach with caution.

Cat — cat o' nine tails; *whip* with multiple strands.

Catheterization — inserting sterile medical catheter into the urethra for erotic purposes. For reasons of psychological and physical health, this *advanced technique* is not a *novice* activity, and requires one-on-one training.

Co-Top — one of two or more people Topping together who may be equal in stature or may be *Top* and *Junior Top* — although it is usually best to agree before the scene who will take the lead; to Top in this fashion.

Cock ring — a band of leather, rubber, metal, etc., encircling the male genitals snugly, sometimes used to assist in maintaining an erection, sometimes used on a male *bottom* as a genital collar to signify ownership.

Collar — a band of leather, metal, cloth, etc., encircling the neck of a person, signifying a *bottom* role.

Collaring — the act, generally performed by the Top or at the Top's direction, of putting a collar in place on a bottom to formally signify roles.

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Consensual — based on mutual agreement; not coerced; one of the three cornerstones of social SM play: *safe, sane, and consensual*.

Consensual nonconsent — a general agreement between players that the *Top* may do things to or with the *bottom* that the bottom will specifically not agree to; an advanced psychological game, not for inexperienced players.

Corporal punishment (CP) — domestic or military physical punishment.

Corset training — reducing waist size through use of corsets, belts, or other constricting devices.

Cracker — extra piece of leather or nylon cord at the tip of a bullwhip, used for making popping sound.

Crop — stick with a leather flap, as a riding crop; the flap, not the stick, is used to strike the body.

Crossdresser (CD) — one who wears clothes of the other sex; not necessarily or even usually an SM activity, but sometimes used in SM scenes for SM purposes.

Cross-orientation play — SM play between or among people (e.g., a lesbian and a gay man) whose sexual orientations would ordinarily preclude their having erotic encounters.

Cuffs — handcuffs or leather restraints for wrists and ankles.

Cunt torture — intense stimulation --not necessarily painful-- of the female genitals.

Cutting — using a scalpel blade or other sharp instrument to cut the skin for sensation, blood, decorative scarification, or claiming. This is

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an *advanced technique*, not a *novice* activity, and should be undertaken only by a person trained in the relevant techniques who is using sterile equipment.

DS — (D/S; D & S; Dominance and Submission) Umbrella term for the exchange of erotic power or control of one partner over another; does not require physical pain.

Dark side — the aspect(s) of a person not socially sanctioned (e.g., bully, victim, *sadist*, *masochist*) that one allows to emerge in a controlled manner in a *scene*.

Dildo — cucumber- or penis-shaped sex toy usually made of rubber or silicone designed for insertion into body cavities.

Dildo harness — device that holds a *dildo* in place on the inserter's body.

Discipline — real or fantasy punishment; also *training*.

Do-me queen — a *bottom* whose sole interest is in receiving physical, sexual, and/or emotional attention, and does not give back to the *Top*.

Domestic discipline — discipline in the context of ordinary household or everyday behavior, e.g.: parent (or other authority figure) and child, *Mistress* or *Master* and maid or houseboy, schoolteacher and pupil.

Dominance — controlling and directing the *scene*.

Dominant — person who directs the *scene* and issues the commands.

Dungeon — a room designed and decorated specifically for SM play; an older term is "blackroom," a newer term is "playroom."

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Edge play — (1) SM play that is on the edge of a player's limits, whatever those limits may be; (2) SM play that is especially risky either physically, such as *breath control*, or psychologically, such as heavy *humiliation*.

Electroplay — use of static, battery, or house electrical current to stimulate the body and especially the genitals. Electricity other than static electricity is not to be used above the waist, according to many sources, because of its potential to interfere with heart rhythms. A great deal of controversy surrounds this extreme practice, and more than most activities not recommended for *novices*, electroplay should not be used without intense personal research and relevant training.

Endorphins — a group of endogenous, morphine-like hormones secreted by the brain when the body is under unusual stress, which fit into the brain's opioid receptors and stimulate them to fire, producing tranquilizing and pain-killing properties that appear to help induce a sort of euphoria; some people report feeling a state of well-being similar to endorphin euphoria after experiencing intense sensations such as those associated with prolonged *flagellation*.

Endorphin shock — an overload to the physical and mental system that results from too great a quantity of endorphins being released too intensely in too short a period of time as a response to overstimulation.

English vice — a Victorian euphemism for *caning*.

Erotic Energy Exchange — the giving and receiving of psychic energy or libido, specifically channeled into sensuality.

Erotic Power Exchange/Play — consensual transfer of control from *bottom* to *Top* during an SM scene or relationship; also, umbrella term for all activities ordinarily defined as *SM*, *BD*, *DS*, etc, like *BDSM*.

Erotic theatre — use of set and setting—costume, music, props, ambience, location, role play, themes, mindset, etc.—to enhance an erotic experience.

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Extreme play — see *heavy play*.

Fetishism — eroticization of objects, behaviors, and/or body parts.

Fisting — insertion of hand or large part of hand into rectal, vaginal, or oral cavity. This is an *advanced technique* that requires hands-on training by an expert.

Flagellation — scourging or striking, especially with whips; in SM flagellation often includes striking with hands or other objects; so, generally: *whipping, caning, cropping, paddling, spanking*.

Flogger — heavy *whip* with multiple wide, flat tails.

Gag — leather, cloth, or rubber device used in mouth to silence or muffle sound, and/or to create a feeling of being controlled in the person who is gagged.

Gender fuck — mixing simultaneous male and female gender cues, e.g.: wearing cowboy boots with fishnet stockings, lipstick and a beard, a jockstrap and a tutu.

Gender play — using gender cues and attributes other than those usually associated with one's own sex to alter a physical or psychological reality for erotic purposes.

Genitorture — intense stimulation —not necessarily painful-- of the genitals.

Getting done — getting **exactly** what one needs **and** wants in a scene without having to beg, earn, trade, or submit for it—unless doing so is **also** what one wants.

Going under — the submissive process, usually gradual, of achieving the altered state of consciousness of *surrender*.

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Golden showers (GS) — playing with urine for erotic purposes, as in urinating on someone or being urinated on; see *watersports*.

Harness — body decoration of rope or leather straps, sometimes used for *bondage*, including chest harness, face harness, cock and ball harness, etc.

Head games — see *Mind games*.

Heavy play — sophisticated or advanced activities or techniques used for psychological or physical stimulation that require special training for safety reasons, e.g., *breath control*, *cutting*, temporary and/or permanent *piercing*, *branding*, *burning*, *electroplay*; also, play that is **very** intense physically and/or psychologically, as **very** intense pain, or **very** deep surrender.

Hood — leather, latex, or spandex head covering, often with mouth and eye openings that can be laced, zippered, snapped, or otherwise shut; sometimes with no openings except nose holes for breathing; sometimes, as with breathable spandex, with no holes at all.

Humiliation — deliberate ego reduction for consensual erotic purposes, ranging from mild embarrassment to degradation; may be physical and/or psychological; not genuinely lowering self-esteem.

Immobilization — rendering a *bottom* helpless by completely restricting movement through *bondage*; see *mummification*.

Infantilism — eroticization of being treated (or treating someone else) as a baby or a toddler; not restricted to SM; see *age play*.

Interrogation — consensual nonconsensual resistance game in which the *Top* questions the *bottom* using *torture* to push *limits*; if the scene becomes too intense the bottom's *safeword* is the information sought by the Top.

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Junior Top — a *Top* who assists the Top in charge, as, for example, a Top in training.

Limits — boundaries of consent as negotiated between partners, including activities in which one person does not wish to participate; according to a writer in *Brat Attack* #1, a limit is the point at which something fun becomes un-fun. **Hard** limits are those that absolutely must not be breached; **soft** limits may be negotiable under some circumstances and/or with some partners.

Local torture — using the entire body—not only breasts, nipples, genitals, and ass, but also many muscles and any skin surface—as an organ of tactile stimulation; also known as pleasurable pain.

Manacles and shackles — metal restraints to bind the wrists and ankles, respectively. These devices usually lock, and are frequently used in pairs chained together to restraint the independent movement of either arm or leg.

Masochist — person who enjoys receiving intense sensation in a consensual, erotic context.

Master — masculine title of respect accorded one who dominates or owns a consenting partner.

Medical — scenes, examinations, procedures, and/or equipment, such as uniforms, enemas, rectal thermometers, catheters, sounds.

Middle — someone in a scene who is simultaneously *submissive* to the *Top* and, under her instruction, *dominant* over the *bottom*.

Mind games — using fear, anger, anxiety, embarrassment, sadness, etc. to manipulate a person's psychological state for erotic purposes, as in mental control, *slave training*, consensual nonconsensuality, terror, interrogation. Also, mind fuck.

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Mistress — feminine title of respect accorded one who *dominates* or owns a consenting partner.

Mummification — *bondage* effected by encasing a person in plastic wrap or gauze and tape, elastic and linen bandages, wide latex strips, a sleep sack, or a leather, latex, or spandex body bag so that he is tightly restrained and looks, well, like a mummy; for safety reasons this is an *advanced technique* that requires training and caution.

NT — nipple torture; intense --not necessarily painful-- stimulation of the nipples.

Negotiation — conferring and discussing to reach an agreement about what will happen in an SM scene regarding likes, dislikes, limits, health issues, *roles*, etc.

Novice — someone new to the scene, or to a specific activity.

Packing — wearing a *dildo* under clothes to simulate a penis.

Paddling — striking, usually on the buttocks, with a flat, rigid object made of leather, wood, horn, plastic, etc.

Panic snap — a specially designed clip originally used to harness horses, used in SM for *suspension*, standing bondage, or bondage lying down; it can be easily and quickly released even when a great deal of weight is hanging from it or when tension is on the line.

Parachute — leather cone encircling the testicles, with chains to hold weights, leash, etc.

Penetration — insertion of dildoes, butt plugs, enemas, catheters, or body parts (fingers, hands, penises) into another person's body cavities. Leaving considerations of safer sex apart, penetration activities like *fisting* and *catheterization* are *advanced techniques* and should not be undertaken without personal investigation and training.

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Penis sheath — a cover made of leather or rubber that encases the penis, and sometimes the testicles as well; may be equipped with straps, laces, or D-rings for *bondage* purposes.

Persona — single facet of a whole personality, fully expressed *as* a whole personality (e.g., the inner child); see also: *role*.

Pet — a *bottom* who consensually gives up psychological and physical control in an SM scene or relationship specifically to please the *Top*, usually through both *submission* and *service*, **and** in order to be treated by the *Top* as a special, prized possession.

Piercing — temporary: horizontal penetration of skin or flesh with a sterile needle; permanent: horizontal penetration of skin or flesh with a professional piercing needle for placement of body jewelry; sometimes erotic, but not restricted to SM; in any case not a novice activity, but an *advanced technique* not to be undertaken without relevant training.

Play — engage in a *scene*; known in some locales by other terms.

Property — one who is consensually owned as *pet*, *submissive*, or *slave* in an SM scene or relationship; may be temporary or permanent.

Punishment — a mode of actual or fantasy discipline in which the *Top* corrects the *bottom*.

Pushing limits — consensually expanding the boundaries of one's own or another's physical and/or psychological experience; usually, after prior negotiation, bringing a *bottom* to his limit, then carefully encouraging him to go just a little bit further.

Quirt — riding *whip* with a short, usually flexible handle and, generally, two tails—sometimes four—attached to the handle by a leather hinge.

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Rebel bottom (Rebo) — a *bottom* who likes to provoke the *Top* to prove that he can control the bottom; different from a *SAM* or *SAS* because the *role* is conscious, acknowledged, and consensual.

Resistance — unwilling or difficult bottoming; sometimes a consensual adversarial power dynamic.

Restraints — *cuffs*, usually made of leather, that close around wrists and ankles and also, sometimes, around thighs, waist, etc.

Role — part (e.g., *Top*, *bottom*) taken in a scene or relationship; also: character assumed and play-acted for effect, for fun, or for drama, but not necessarily a facet of one's personality in itself (e.g., Bad Cop, Nurse Nasty); see also: *persona*.

SM — (S/M, S & M, Sadomasochism) the consensual giving and receiving of intense erotic sensation; once commonly used as an umbrella term to describe any and all consensual exchanges of erotic power.

SM orgasm — cathartic, full-body release of psychic, emotional, physical, and/or spiritual energy; not necessarily genital.

Sadist — person who enjoys giving intense sensation in a consensual erotic context.

Safe, sane, & consensual — slogan used in the SM communities to self-define tacit standards of behavior.

Safeword — word or gesture previously agreed upon for use by both *Tops* and *bottoms* to halt the action in a *scene* or a relationship; sometimes called slow word or stop word. In some communities the word "safeword" itself signifies the need for assistance in a public play space, and the word "medical" signifies a need for medical intervention.

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SAM (smart-assed masochist) — mischievous *bottom*, who sometimes attempts to provoke *Top* into administering more pain.

SAS (smart-assed submissive) — mischievous *bottom*, who sometimes attempts to provoke *Top* into exercising more *dominance*.

Scat — erotic play with feces; *brown showers*.

Scene — a single SM encounter involving two or more partners; also, **the scene**: the whole BDSM community, including organizations, play spaces, social events, manufacture and sale of equipment, etc.

Sensory deprivation — using blindfolds, gags, ear plugs, hoods, bondage, etc. to reduce information available to one or more senses, resulting in an increased sensitivity to information of other senses; e.g., if you inhibit a person's ability to see and hear, his experiences of touch and/or smell can be enhanced.

Service — doing for another; in an SM, DS, or BDSM context, usually by the bottom for the *Top*, as an expression of obedience, respect, *submission*, devotion, love, etc.

Slapper — paddle that ends in a double flap of leather, so it makes noise disproportionate to its impact.

Slave — person who is consensually owned as property of another; often used interchangeably with *submissive*, but slave usually represents a deeper, sometimes non-sexual, level of submission.

Slave contract — agreement, usually written and signed, between *Master* or *Mistress* and *slave*; may be for a day, a weekend, a month, or a lifetime.

Sling — Large, hammock-like rectangle, usually but not always made of leather, and usually suspended from the ceiling with chains by four

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corners, so that a person can lie on his/her back with legs up and genitals and anus very available for play. Some specialty slings are suspended by two attachment points from the two ends of a spreader bar, creating a form of one-point sling suspension, which is very practical in places where one can't or does not wish to put four ringbolts deep into the ceiling.

Spanking — striking the body, usually the buttocks, with a bare or gloved hand.

Spreader bar — length of rigid material with loops or attachment points used to keep *bottom's* legs or wrists apart.

Straight — not SM; see: *vanilla*; also, sometimes, heterosexual.

Straight time — time out of role before or after—or during a break in the middle of—a *scene*.

Strap-on — a device consisting of a *dildo* and a *dildo harness* worn to be used as a penis.

Submission — volitional giving up of control and power: decision that one is not in charge.

Submissive — person who gives up power and control in a *scene* or a relationship.

Surrender — the emotional, spiritual, and/or psychological space in which *submission* has been accomplished: the willing experience that one is not in charge.

Suspension — a form of *bondage* in which a person is partly or completely raised off the ground by a hoist, winch, etc.; an *advanced technique* that requires training and proper equipment.

Suspension harness — straps encircling the body so that it can be raised up off the ground.

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Sweet spot — the center of the bottom of the cheeks of the ass at the top of the thighs, where the line between meets the line below (on the crack; **not** the coccyx or tailbone, which is fragile and should never be struck); so called because it is usually considered the most erotic place on the buttocks to strike; also, sometimes, any place a person prefers to be struck.

Switch — a person who takes both *Top* and *bottom* roles; also a *cane* made of willow.

T T — tit torture; intense stimulation —not necessarily painful-- the male or female breasts and/or nipples.

Temperature play — use of thermally extreme substances (e.g., ice or candle wax) to stimulate sensation.

Tit clamps — clothespins, stationary clips, C-clamps, etc. used for stimulation of nipples, genitals, etc.

Top — umbrella term for the person in a *scene* who takes the *dominant* or *sadistic* role.

Top drop — the Top's feeling, hours, days or even weeks after a scene, of being angry, exhausted, etc., as a result of not having had her own needs met, or of crashing after the high of a *scene*.

Top from the bottom — covertly trying to control the scene from the *bottom's* position.

Top space — the emotional and psychological condition of *knowing* one is in control in a *scene*; corollary to *bottom space*.

Top's disease — a term coined by Patrick Califia in the 1970s to describe nonconsensual domineering; acting as if one is in charge of everyone and everything 24 hours a day; thinking one is better than any *bottom* because one is a *Top*, and/or that all bottoms are inferior to all Tops.

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Torture — intense stimulation —not necessarily painful-- for erotic purposes.

Toy — equipment used in a scene; in some geographic locales other terms are preferred, e.g., tool, gear, equipment, etc.

Training — distinct from ordinary teaching, SM training is the process of teaching someone to behave in specific ways, usually done by a *Top* with a *bottom*. Instruction may range from light to strict, and is limited chiefly by the desires of the Top, the abilities of the bottom to satisfy those desires, the nature of the relationship between Top and bottom, and their imaginations. For example:

- **Dog training** concerns treating the bottom as a dog; it might include teaching her to bark, beg, fetch, heel, eat from a dog dish, and/or be paper-trained for urination or defecation;
- **Equestrian training** concerns treating the bottom as a horse; it might include bridling, mouth leashing, riding, cropping, and/or teaching him to prance or to pull a cart or sulky;
- **Feminization training** concerns teaching a (usually) male *bottom* to be feminine: to walk in high heels, apply make-up, and otherwise behave in a conventionally feminine manner;
- **Slave training** concerns treating the *bottom* as a *slave*; it might include instruction in how best to *serve*, please, and worship the *Top*, perform housework, etc.

Trans — general abbreviation for one who feels or presents him or herself to be a member of the sex other than the one assigned at birth; also, transgendered person. The gender communities, like the SM communities, are only recently out of the closet; as a consequence, their definitions, images, and self-reflections are very much in flux. At present some gender terms include:

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- **Transgender (TG)** — person who lives full time as a member of the sex other than the one he or she was assigned at birth, but who does not undergo sexual reassignment surgery (SRS); not necessarily or even usually an SM activity.
- **Transsexual (TS)** — person who has changed sex, or who self-defines as a member of the sex other than the one he or she was assigned at birth; not necessarily or even usually an SM activity; sometimes also, especially among TSs, *transsexual*.
- **Transvestite (TV)** — one who wears the clothes of the sex other than the one he or she was assigned at birth; not necessarily or even usually an SM activity; see *Crossdresser*.

24/7 — a committed, full-time (24 hours per day, 7 days per week) *Top/bottom* relationship, e.g., *Master/slave* or *Mistress/slave*.

Vampire games — eroticization of sucking real or simulated blood or erotic energy; also, eroticization of vampire costumes, make-up, and teeth. If real blood is ingested, HIV/AIDS and other health care issues must be attended to.

Vanilla — not in the *scene*; conventional, as in vanilla intercourse.

Verbal abuse (VA) — using disparaging or derogatory language to scold, insult, or otherwise chastise or humiliate a *bottom* for erotic gratification.

Watersports (WS) — using urine or enemas for erotic purposes.

Whip — some people believe that the only proper “whip” is a single-tail, such as a snake or a bullwhip, and that multi-tail flagellation instruments are “cats,” “floggers,” “quirts,” etc; for the purposes of this book, however, a whip is any flexible object such as a *cat*, *quirt*, or bullwhip used for *flagellation*; sometimes also includes *crops*, *canes*, etc.

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Whipping — use of a *whip* or whips to strike the body; *flagellation*.

Worship — adoring and/or loving a person, a person's body, or a thing in a reverential manner.

Wrapping — striking with a *whip*, *cane*, or other *flagellation* device in such a manner that the tips curl around the struck body due to centripetal force, striking beyond the intended target; usually results from unsatisfactory whip aim.

Zipper — clothespins strung close together on leather or cotton cord, or placed over cord laid upon the skin, then attached to the body in a row; when one or both ends are sharply pulled, all the clothespins come off at once, leaving a temporary mark on the skin that resembles a closed zipper.

Playing Safely

What Makes SM Safe

If you've gotten this far in the book you know *something* about SM in theory; you have some sense of the language of SM, how it's used, and to what ends; and it's quite possible you've had at least a little hands-on experience of SM play. You've probably also decided to pursue your interests a little further. If that's the case, you can enhance your future SM pleasure by taking the time and trouble to learn how to play safely—a process that includes learning what *not* to do.

Some safety information is technical, and we'll address it in "SM Safety," beginning on page 161. But some is based in a greater knowledge of SM; a clearer recognition of what SM activities mean to you; and, of course, a deeper understanding of yourself.

Knowing What You Want, Knowing What You Need, & Knowing the Difference Between Them

Some people have difficulty expressing their needs and wants directly, in SM or anywhere else, because doing so contradicts their training: from listening to other people, or from their own experiences, they learned to be circumspect, diplomatic, or plain old devious, and to get what they needed without risking conflict or the feelings of rejection or inadequacy that might arise from openly asking for something and being refused. In addition, many people do not know the difference between a want and a need.

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The difference between a need and a want is that a want is negotiable, and a need is not. When you're hungry and thirsty you may want champagne and caviar, but you need water and bread. What you need in a scene are those people, activities, and/or objects without which you *cannot* be satisfied: without which there is little or no point for you to do the scene; without which you will go away from a scene still hungry; for which you came to these games in the first place. In flat sexual terms—not always apt for SM, but good for poetry—what you need is what makes your dick hard or your cunt wet.

What you *want* in a scene is everything else you enjoy. A sadist may *need* to inflict pain to make a scene worthwhile, whether or not she also enjoys her bottom's service and submission; a slave may *need* to serve, whether or not she enjoys the spanking that comes with service for her particular Top.

As we'll discuss at greater length in the following section, on negotiation, if you don't know the difference between your needs and wants, see what thrills you in your fantasies, and what is merely entertainment. What took you over in your past experiences? And what was simply icing on the cake? For example:

- What does the Top or bottom of your dreams look like? How does she talk?
- What's the physical setting? Are you in a dungeon, your bedroom, the other person's home, school, the rectory, the woods? Does the setting even matter to you?
- What's the psychological set? Is the Top cruel, strict but kind, demanding and punitive, distant and cold, intimate and close? Is the bottom a smart-assed masochist, a devoted and obedient slave, a naughty school kid, a hapless captive?
- What is the time? Present, tomorrow, far distant future, yesterday, or long, long ago?

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- What are you wearing? What's your partner wearing? What's the lighting, what's the music, who else is present?
- Is pain involved? If so, is it a punishment, a reward, a demonstration of power, or strictly sensation?
- Is your fantasy based around a fetish? Is your fetish a need in itself? *Must* he be in a complete, perfect police uniform, or will the mirrored sunglasses suffice? Are any bare feet okay, or must they have high arches, trim ankles, and long red toenails?
- If you're the Top do you want to administer sensation? To be served? Or do you want to control your charge? If you're a bottom are you looking to get done? Or do you want to serve, to give up control and not to be in charge? In other words, does your fantasy revolve around dominance and submission, sadomasochism, or fetishism? If you think more than one is important, how important is each in your fantasy?

Whether they're fetishes or costumes, looks, settings, behaviors, or attitudes, sex needs can be quirky and very specific. Right now you're in the realm of fantasy, where nothing is prohibited and everything is permissible. Be honest with yourself about your needs, therefore, even if the admissions are embarrassing, impossible, politically incorrect, or too nasty for words.

If at this point you still don't know what you need and what you want in a scene, make a written list of everything—*everything*—you can imagine wanting. Walk yourself through the fantasy that always gets you hot and write down all the elements that matter.

Then select from your list just one item: if you could have nothing else in a scene, what one person, activity, object, locale, etc. would come closest to making that scene worth your while? Add a second item to your list, and a third if you absolutely must have three.

Make your distinctions carefully: try not to claim that a very, very strong want is a need. If you *choose* to live on bread and water you may

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choose any boutique bakery's golden raisin bread and designer bottles of naturally effervescent mountain spring dew you like. But if you *have* to live on bread and water, you take what you get. Everything you enjoy in a scene that is not essential to your purpose in being there is a want, so after you know what you need you might prioritize your wants as well, from those that are very, very strong to those that are passing fancies.

When you know your needs and you know your wants, state them clearly in your negotiations (see page 81). If you have difficulty stating them face-to-face, write your partner a letter about them. Even if it's easy for you to talk face-to-face, writing things down can be worthwhile because we all forget things from time to time, especially in the heat of lust.

Sometimes standing by your feelings may mean you won't get to play with someone you've been ogling, or that you have to decline to play with someone who's hot for you. But it's far better to turn down what is likely to be an unhappy scene than it is to have one. If your prospective play partners know your needs and you know theirs, you'll all be better able to decide who you want to play with and under what circumstances. Then you'll have more scenes that are satisfying, and fewer that are not.

Like all interactions with other people, SM is a two-way street. In addition to knowing what you need and want, you can further enhance your scenes by knowing what you *offer* to the exchange that someone else might enjoy or benefit from. If you need to spank, for example, you'll more likely have good spanking scenes if you bring to them an awareness of your need, some education in how best to administer a variety of spankings, some awareness of what different kinds of bottoms like about being spanked, some thoughts about the nature of the scene you want and the goals you want to achieve in it, and some hands-on experience with spanking—at least as a Top, but ideally as a bottom as well, if for no other reason than that it will help you understand some of what your bottom, and your bottom's bottom, are going through.

Are you embarrassed by your fantasies? Do you feel you're too kinky, needy, wimpy, weird, sick, or even too vanilla? Or do you just find yourself too embarrassed to talk about sex? You can practice talking and asking questions about sex anonymously by calling your local sex

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information or 900 hotline. If you have no such service near you, you can call the San Francisco Sex Information (SFSI) switchboard at 415-989-7374 (989-SFSI) or toll-free at 877-472-7374; or visit SFSI on the web at www.SFSI.org. The SFSI switchboard is generally open Monday through Friday from 3:00 pm - 9:00 pm Pacific Standard Time. The service is free, but SFSI cannot accept collect calls.

SFSI is an information and referral line that maintains an extensive list of medical, psychological, social, educational, and other community services pertaining to all forms of sexuality and sexual expression, not just SM; SFSI's resources are mostly, but not exclusively, located in the greater San Francisco Bay Area.

SFSI is staffed by volunteers who have been trained to provide basic, factual, non-judgmental information regarding human sexuality, and to provide referrals to specific sorts of resources when those are what callers seek. Sometimes people who call SFSI don't want information or referrals, however; sometimes they just want to know whether their particular sexual behaviors, attitudes, or feelings fall within the generally acceptable limits of human sexuality. SFSI volunteers have been trained to respond to these sorts of calls, as well as to recognize when a caller needs the counseling or therapy that is beyond their scope, and then to make referrals to appropriate therapists. SFSI is not a phone sex line: "dirty talk" and masturbation are not appropriate when you call.

If you want to learn more about the kinds of calls SFSI receives, syndicated sex columnist Isadora Alman has written a book about her experiences as a SFSI volunteer, called *Sex Information: Can I Help You?*, published by Down There Press (938 Howard Street, San Francisco, CA 94103). Down There Press, like Good Vibrations, is a subsidiary of Open Enterprises. Call them at 415-974-8985 or toll-free at Good Vibrations, 800-289-8423 (800-BUY-VIBE).

Negotiation, Limits, & Safewords

Negotiation

When we were being socialized most of us learned to think of negotiation as the art of getting as much as we could while giving up as little as possible. As part of that process we learned what power knowledge is, and so we also learned to hold back important information until we could benefit from it, to pressure others to do as we demanded, and sometimes even to lie, cheat, and steal to get our way.

If we were adept at this game we became nonconsensual Tops—bullies, even—and got the mates, jobs, honors, and goods that were, in effect, the spoils of our little wars. If we were less adept we probably learned to Top from the bottom instead: to manipulate people and situations to our advantage, or even to change our desires so that we preferred the mates, jobs, honors, and goods we got to those we now perceived we didn't really want anyway. In either case we learned to apply the win-lose strategy of competition to our personal encounters and nearly always to come out winners, if only in our own minds.

In the world of consensual erotic power exchange, negotiation has a very different purpose: instead of competition we seek partnership. At least ideally, we play a win-win game based on the art of telling all and holding back nothing so that we have the best chance to find appropriate partners and to fulfill our complementary desires with them in mutually satisfactory ways.

SM negotiation includes initial and ongoing, verbal and nonverbal communications. It is the underpinning for consensuality, because we cannot agree, or consent, to give something if we do not know it has been requested, nor can we accept something if we do not know it has been offered. In addition, the more completely and openly we negotiate about what we want or have to offer, the more we can establish the parity that underlies any exchange of equal *value*. That parity establishes the basis for mutual respect, which is the *sine qua non* of mutual trust, which, in turn, is the one absolute necessity for intimacy. Intimacy allows us to validate ourselves and each other, and to create our own opportunities to grow,

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by enabling us to become explicitly aware of who we are and who our partners are. In this way intimacy can be one of the chief objects of erotic power play, and one of the chief fruits of win-win negotiation.

To some extent we're invoking an ideal of SM negotiation here, but doing so is part and parcel of establishing a definition: variations of all sorts may fall from it. As a reflection of this ideal we can see that the process of SM negotiation includes learning everything you can about your (prospective) play partner and telling her everything you can about yourself, so you will both be in the closest possible agreement about what's likely to make a good scene, what's likely to be all right, and what's likely not to work when you play together. A complete negotiation may go on for a lifetime, but usually it can be confined to issues that crop up in the limited time and space of a scene.

A basic negotiation addresses both physical and psychological needs and wants, which we've discussed, and limits, which we'll discuss shortly. It also includes questions about what is unknown. The best-established way we know to conduct this sort of negotiation is through what is usually called the 1-2-3 list. For example, if you're a novice:

1. What kinds of activities are you interested in exploring?
2. What are you *not* interested in exploring? Why?
3. What are you not sure about?

You can use the same kind of list if you're an experienced player:

1. What kinds of scenes or activities do you like?
2. What do you not like? Why?
3. What are you not sure about?

Learning what you like is closely related to learning your wants and your needs. Again, therefore, if you don't know what you like, one place to

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begin an exploration is with your fantasies. These are likely to be more extreme than the reality you'll want to live with, but the images your mind provides will give you a sense of the direction you want to move in.

There are many different types and styles of negotiation, of course. As a Top, Sybil likes prospective bottoms to submit a letter to her before any play agreements are reached, outlining the bottom's experiences, fantasies, and health; Bill prefers to have a conversation, as if on a first date. Some people like the Dr. Kinsey method, in which the Top takes the bottom's SM and sex history.

If you have a playful bent you can take pleasure in any sort of negotiation by turning it into a refined sort of flirting, though if you flirt you need to be careful that you don't slip into role before the actual scene begins. Very often neither a Top persona nor a bottom persona can really negotiate for parity or from a position of equality: the Top simply wants to take over *now*, and the bottom simply wants to give things over *now*. For this sort of reason pre-play negotiations done in role may sometimes be profoundly colored by the Top's and/or the bottom's lust, and may not accurately reflect the person's needs and wants, or the discrepancies between them.

In addition to addressing each person's wants and needs and coming to some agreement about them, any negotiation should include a discussion about sex, and about the health of all parties, including allergies, susceptibility to temperature changes and extremes, a history of surgeries or injuries, the need for medications, and the use of prescription and non-prescription drugs. It should also include a discussion about everyone's psychological state, so that, for example, a deeply introverted bottom who cannot stand to be displayed does not suddenly find herself trussed up like a Thanksgiving turkey at the next Bondage Beauty Pageant.

The experience you acquire by practicing negotiating skills in an SM context can be extremely useful elsewhere. Not only in vanilla sex, but also in business, on dates, on family trips and visits, in Chinese restaurants, and just about anywhere people's divergent wishes have to be reconciled, these skills can help to make sure everyone's needs are met, and a maximum number of desires as well.

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Although you will eventually develop your own set of negotiating points if you play, as well as your own approach to negotiating these points, we've provided a sample list beginning on page 91.

Limits

We said earlier that negotiation should cover all players' limits. A limit, which might be thought of as a feature of a person's needs, is something someone never wants to do at all, never wants to do under certain circumstances or with specific people, or is a point beyond which someone is too uncomfortable to continue. Terror is a limit for some people; relentless pain is a limit for others; for still others, sex may be a limit. Perhaps sex must be part of a scene for you, but must not for the person with whom you're negotiating. If it is going to be part of your scene, then safe sex and birth control (if appropriate) may become limits that need to be discussed as well.

In dealing with limits, include behaviors and attitudes that would be upsetting to one player in a non-erotic way, those that are not to be done, and those that are absolute turnoffs or that provoke phobic responses. With prior negotiation some limits may be reached and then challenged, pushed, and even expanded; but before pushing a limit be sure to negotiate that possibility in straight time and with exceptional care rather than during a scene, when erotic energy can dispose us to behave in ways we may regret later. A hard limit is one that must not be breached: it is entirely non-negotiable; a soft limit can be negotiated under some circumstances and/or with some partners.

When a player is at the edge of his limits the entire scene is at the boundary between consensuality and nonconsensuality; and while many experienced players find that playing on this edge provides exactly the excitement they play for, you cannot assume your partner feels that way unless you've discussed the possibility. Limits that are reached are most often the bottom's, so a Top should pay special attention when they are approached: proceed very slowly and maintain absolute concentration and attention on the bottom and all the bottom's responses.

Physical limits are usually obvious as areas of bodily concern:

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genital shaving, marks such as bruises, too much pain. But a limit may be psychological rather than (or as well as) physical if it concerns an emotional or intellectual area a person doesn't want to play with, or that provokes phobia. Degradation, for example, may be enough of a turnoff for some people that they simply can't play with it; the very sight of a needle or a blade may pull other bottoms right out of their bottom space.

Safewords

Safewords are codes the SM community has adopted for players to alert each other that a limit is being approached or has been exceeded. Words other than No, Stop, or Slow Down are usually designated because SM is a *consensual* eroticism in the realm of *erotic theatre*. If a bottom could just say "Stop" to end a scene, the illusion that the Top has total control might be threatened. Besides, many bottoms enjoy the fantasy of nonconsensuality and scream "No, no, please stop!"—or words to that effect—when the scene is really going very well; they would be upset, confused, and even angry if a Top actually did stop in response to their outbursts. Even bottoms who don't like to play resistance games don't generally wish to disturb the power of the Top space. Thus the value of code words.

Any word *can* be used as a safeword, and people have tried things like "pickle" and "radish" in the past. But these kinds of words proved too disconnected from the activities they were supposed to address, and in the heat of passion bottoms often forgot them. In *The Lesbian S/M Safety Manual* Pat Califia suggests three words that are relevant and easy to remember: *mercy* (please lighten up physically), *cruel* (I feel emotionally unsafe), and the *Top's first name* (stop the scene immediately and completely).

Like many people in the SM communities, we both use *yellow* (slow down) and *red* (stop the scene); Sybil also likes *green* (go!). Because of their broad application as traffic signals these color words are easily taught to novices: they seem to be easy for most people to remember, and they communicate the information they are intended to communicate in a non-threatening manner. In response to a couple of upsetting incidents a few years ago the community as a whole developed its own safeword

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for use at parties and in other public settings. The word is *safeword*; its purpose is to solicit immediate, *non-violent* assistance for a scene that's gotten out of control. Some people also use "medical" as a safeword specifically to call attention to a medical question or emergency.

Sometimes new players don't or won't use safewords under what we regard as the mistaken impression that having a safeword belies the trust they want to feel in any scene, or that having a safeword ruins a scene's spontaneity. We dispute both these contentions. First, if you trust me enough to play with me, you surely must be able to trust that I will not use a safeword indiscriminately. Second, if I can be distracted by the fear that something might go wrong, I'll be far less spontaneous than I will be if my fear is contained by my knowledge that I can call *red* if I have to, and have my safeword respected.

Some very experienced Tops also dislike playing with safewords. Because they believe that safewords steal their power these Tops may even feel insulted by a bottom's request for safewords, as if the request itself impugns their abilities to read the bottom's body language and, by extension, their very right to Top in the first place. We suggest otherwise. First, while it is fairly easy to learn to read a bottom's body language around physical limits, it can be impossible for the Top, the bottom, or the bottom's body to anticipate some kinds of emotional limits that are reached and breached in a single moment, without warning.

Second, playing with no safeword is like performing on a high wire without a safety net. The added dazzle that accrues to the daring performance does so because the performer is risking her own life. For a high-wire artist building or maintaining a performance reputation, gambling with her own well-being may be a clearly calculated risk. But for an SM player to be more concerned with her self-image than with the safety of her partners and herself, whether in a private or a party scene, is more likely to be ego inflation that can obstruct the Top's real abilities and put people's health, safety, and even lives at risk.

We both recognize the need for trust in SM play, and we both recognize that the deeper, more personal, more profound, and more intimate that play, the deeper, more personal, more profound, and more intimate the trust that accompanies it must be. We also recognize the differences

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between lifestyle relationships and light-hearted SM fun. In a lifestyle relationship it is often the bottom who wants to do without safewords, as a means of offering his trust as a gift to the Top.

At the same time, we also recognize that emergencies can arise. Because emergencies generally arise from events that *are* not anticipated and frequently from events that *cannot* be anticipated, having safewords to use *if the need arises* seems to us to be only a sign of SM wisdom. If a Top who wants no safewords is as good as she believes she is, the safeword that secures the scene will never have to be called.

In general, there's a belief in the SM communities that the Top should ask the bottom to repeat their agreed-upon safewords a couple of times during their first few scenes to make sure that the bottom hasn't forgotten them. It's also useful to remember that Tops have limits too, and that Tops as well as bottoms can use safewords when their limits are approached or exceeded. No one of us human beings behaves in perfect knowledge at all times, and no one has no limits. There is no shame in having limits, therefore, and if you cannot acknowledge yours you probably shouldn't be playing with SM in the first place.

Limits and safewords should be part of every negotiation. In addition, when negotiating:

- Don't assume. Instead, start negotiating from ignorance. When approaching a new partner do not automatically treat her or him as a slave or as a Mistress or Master. Find out how she or he wishes to be addressed (Sir, Ma'am, M'Lady, boy, girl) or regards him or herself (pet, slave, rebel, captive, baby, masochist, fetishist, bully, sadist, dominant, Mistress, Master, etc.).
- Be honest. Say what you need, say what you want, and know the difference. For a successful scene you may *want* tight bondage to secure four hours of whipping as preparation for a long night of sexual service, but you may *need* ten minutes of spanking.
- Don't claim you're into something the other person likes just because you want to play with him or her.

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- If you are inexperienced—in some particular area or as a player overall—acknowledge that. If you're a novice, say so and go slowly: use your hands, your voice, your body weight; do *light* bondage, tease, spank, squeeze, and, for a short time, pinch, instead of doing heavy bondage and whipping, cutting, branding, or 24-hour-a-day slave scenes. Honesty does not make you a wuss. The fantasies of novices—and many experienced players as well—usually exceed their real desires, needs, or abilities.
- Negotiate for parity: negotiate to achieve equal value so that everyone feels satisfied. Being a Top does not give you the right to exploit your bottom, and being a bottom does not mean you do not deserve to have your needs honored. Top or bottom, make sure your own needs can be met.
- Whether you're a Top or a bottom, be willing to acknowledge that your style and interests may not be compatible with those of your negotiating partner; be willing to say you don't think playing with some person or at some time will work out for you: a good friendship is always preferable to a bad scene.
- Complete your scene by having *straight time*. Most straight time takes place before and after a scene, but it's possible to have straight time in the middle of a scene too—judiciously—by calling *yellow* if you have something you must communicate. In your post-scene negotiation communicate about what worked and what didn't work, and if necessary check in again a day, a couple of days, and even a week later. Feelings about your scene may change from day to day: the person who felt wonderful walking out the dungeon door may feel the anguish of *backlash* in the morning, or the person who felt miserable about the scene's progress may discover by morning what a breakthrough it was. Communicate as much as necessary to bring your scene to a close in your mind as well as in your body—but if all this talk isn't necessary, don't beat your scene to death. SM is still supposed to be about having a good time.

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In our Glossary we defined *backlash* as “feelings of regret, disgust, sadness, anger, fear, etc., hours or days after participating willingly and happily in an SM scene.” Like much of human sexuality, only moreso, SM is generally relegated to a hidden world where people may have exciting, fulfilling, and even illuminating experiences that we feel ashamed, frightened, or guilty about afterwards, when we discuss them with other people, or when we remember them after we’ve returned to our usual lives.

The dissonance we feel between the pleasure we had and the belief that our experience was somehow “wrong” can sometimes snap us backwards in our thinking, into more rigid positions than we ever would have taken had we not enjoyed ourselves so much doing what a rather straitlaced and unthinking social morality dictates we weren’t supposed to do at all, let alone enjoy. When that happens a person may feel something like, “Ooomigod! I did *that*? and *liked it*!?! What a sicko I must be! Will X still love and respect me now?” And so forth.

If your partner experiences some backlash, don’t try to fix it. Don’t try to talk him out of his feelings, argue him out of his position, or defend SM or the scene you shared. Just listen to what he has to say with respect. Recognize that feelings and thoughts come and go and change for novices and sophisticated players alike, and that it’s not a good idea to make important decisions in the midst of an upset. After your partner has a chance to settle down, the backlash too will probably diminish. Over time he’ll find his comfort level with SM and your scene—as will you, if it was you and not your partner who had the backlash.

Negotiation Lists

There is no limit to what you can negotiate, and no two people’s concerns will be alike. For the purposes of this book we have prepared two sample negotiation lists. The first covers most of the big issues we could think of, the second is a short form. Our list is intended to be merely a sample: only you can know your own needs, desires, limits, and offerings, and only you can be responsible for them.

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You can use the long list of areas available for SM negotiation in a number of ways. For example, you could place a *yes*, *maybe*, or *no* beside each item to reflect your own position about it. Or you could mark only those activities you've already tried with a + or a -, signifying that you liked or didn't like them, and use a *yes*, *no*, or *maybe* beside those you haven't tried, indicating that you want to, don't want to, or don't yet know. Items in your "maybe" list may become "yes" items when you feel turned on.

Though no one negotiating a scene is really going to examine every item on a list this elaborate, it *is* important to discuss any likely area of activity with a prospective play partner before getting into a scene: as we said in the Language sections of this book, different people have different interpretations of words. One person thinks that heavy SM is anything that makes her squeal "Ouch!" Another doesn't think a scene is heavy unless some bruises are visible for a week or more.

Your negotiation may also illuminate judgments you've made on the basis of your own experience, which may have been more limited than you realized. If you had a bad experience with some specific activity, that activity might now be on your No list; yet, the reason you didn't like it may have more to do with the way one particular scene or play partner worked out than with the activity itself.

For instance: in her professional work Sybil meets many relative novice bottoms who claim they don't like to be caned. When pressed, however, it turns out that they have only been caned "English" style—as a punishment, and quite severely. When she explains that a cane can be a much more subtle instrument and can be used in ways other than what they've tried, some such people are willing to give the cane another chance. With them, Sybil canes "American" style—with a warm-up of light taps, followed by heavier and more slowly paced strokes, and concluding with one, two, or a few hard strokes separated sufficiently that the recipient has time to absorb and process each impact.

After some straight time the bottom is in a better position to judge his feelings about caning, because he has more information to go on. He would never have had that opportunity if he had not been willing to consider renegotiating even his No list.

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List A: Everything and the Kitchen Sink

Age play

infant

toddler

teen

Anal play

Animal play (being treated, or treating another person, as an animal)

Bisexual play

Body modification

branding

corset training

cutting

high heel training

piercing

permanent

temporary

tattooing

Body worship

ass

breast

chest

cock &/or balls

cunt

foot

hair

hand

leg

nails

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Bondage

- total

- partial

 - breast

 - genitals

 - balls

 - cock

Bondage (extent)

- mild to medium

- medium to severe

- painful

- pleasurable

Bondage (nature)

- control

- punishment

- reward

Bondage (material)

- leather

- metal (handcuffs, shackles, chain, locks)

- plastic wrap

- rope

- rubber

- spandex

Bondage (form)

- body bags

- constrictive

- harnesses

- mummification

- Oriental

- sensory deprivation

 - blindfolds

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earplugs

hoods

gags

spread-eagled

standing alone

standing with/bound to another person or thing

suspension

right-side up

upside-down

Bondage (other types)

Breath control

Catheterization

Castration fantasies

Clips and clamps

Cock and ball play/torture

Corsets

Costume

Crossdressing

demure

provocative

forced

privileged

light

total transformation

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feminization training

Cross-orientation play

Cunt play/torture (see Sex, Genital play, Genital torture)

Daddy/Daddy's boy

Daddy/Daddy's girl

Domestic discipline

Edge play

Electricity

Enemas (see Water Sports)

Erotic teasing

Exhibitionism

Face slapping

Fantasies

Fisting (see Sex)

Flagellation

 birch

 cane

 American style

 English style

 crop

 paddle

 slap

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spank

strap

whip

multi-tailed

single-tail

Foot service/worship/slavery

bare

painted toenails

unpainted toenails

boots

high heels

leg

nylon-clad

other

Furniture training (being trained, or training another person, to function as a footstool, candelabra, table, etc.)

Gender Play

Genital play

balls

cock

cunt

Genital torture

balls

cock

cunt

Group scenes

Health

allergies

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anal traumas
arthritis
asthma
back problems
bladder infections
blood pressure
breast implants
broken bones & bone problems
colds & influenzas
contact lenses
cysts
diabetes
emotional traumas
epilepsy
genital traumas
glaucoma
heart conditions/pacemakers
hemophilia, sickle cell anemia, and other bleeding problems
hemorrhoids
infections
injuries, old or new
joint and back problems
medications*
neck problems
orgasmic syncope (fainting during orgasm)
panic and other hyperventilation attacks
phobias

*Many selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) commonly used as anti-depressants incidentally suppress libido to a significant extent, as do some other medications and some combinations of medications. Frequently there are alternatives to such drugs. If retaining your capacity for sexual pleasure, arousal, and release is important to you, ask your prescribing physician what effects if any s/he anticipates your meds may have on your sex life, and prepare to discuss other options.

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previous bruising or marks
prostate problems
prostheses (artificial teeth, eyes, limbs, etc.)
psychological problems or concerns
rashes
STDs and STCs (sexually transmitted diseases and conditions)
seizures
skin sensitivities
surgeries
tooth and jaw problems
urinary tract problems
other—whatever we have neglected to list that matters to you or your
play partner

Heterosexual play

Homosexual play

Hot wax

Houseboy service/training

Humiliation

mild (teasing, embarrassment)

severe (verbal abuse, degradation)

Kidnap scenes

Kitchen sink

Latex service/worship/slavery

Leather service/worship/slavery

Lesbian play

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Limits

emotional

physical

other

Lingerie service/worship/slavery

Maid service/training

Marks

permanent

temporary

Massage

Medical scenes

Military scenes

Mind-altering substances

Mommy/Mommy's boy

Mommy/Mommy's girl

Necrophilia games

Nipple play

Nipple torture

Oral worship

Public scenes

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Public sex

Punishment scenes

Rape scenes

Ritual scenes

Safewords

Schoolteacher/student scenes

Sex

Anal/digital

 basic (fingers)

 advanced (fisting)

Anal/dildoes and butt plugs

Anal/oral

Anal torture

Birth control

Masturbation

 perform

 watch

 tease denial/arousal discipline

Penile/anal

Penile/manual

Penile/oral

Penile/vaginal

Penile torture

Pornography

Public sex

Safer sex

Vaginal/digital

 basic (fingers)

 advanced (fisting)

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Vaginal/dildoes

Vaginal/oral

Vaginal torture

Vibrators

Shaving (crotch, buttocks, head, legs, armpits, nipples, chest, entire body)

Slave training

Strap-ons

TT (tit torture)

Tickling

Uniforms

Vaginal play (see Sex, Genital play, Genital torture)

Vampire games

Victorian scenes

Voyeurism

Water sports

enemas

retention

temperature

volume

showers

brown

golden

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List B: Brief Form (for easy recollection)

Bondage
Extremes
Fantasy play
 gender
 age
 animal
 furniture
 role
Fetishism
Health
Humiliation
Limits
Marks
Mind-altering substances
Pain
Punishment
Safewords
Sex
Training
Worship
Other, or "Who, What, Where, When, Why, How, and How Much?"

On Doing Psychotherapy in the Dungeon

Because SM play can be extremely cathartic, as well as intimate and intense, some people occasionally try to address deep-seated emotional problems in the dungeon, and even aim to repair traumas from the past or otherwise to "fix" themselves or their play partners during scenes. Although this process may seem to make sense from the outside, it is fraught with problems and even dangers, and we encourage people not to confuse the special, intimate crucible of the consulting room with the time-out-of-time, world-out-of-world intimacy of the play room.

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A person's psychosexual interests are often archetypal, so enacting the kinds of resonant scenarios that speak profoundly to us may sometimes feed the psychic hungers of incomplete or otherwise unsatisfied experiences from someone's childhood. These tend to be compelling scenes we want to repeat more than once, as if we were, in effect, revisiting and even rewriting our pasts. To a certain extent we may be doing just that: such an effect is the goal of many interactive forms of psychotherapy, and of some theatre games as well.

At the same time, however, healing as it may feel, a play scene is not the same as the deep, long-term work of psychotherapy. Many tops have learned how to push their bottoms to the point of catharsis, but have *not* learned what to do with their partners when the catharsis leads to a major emotional upheaval.

Even though buried memories may be stirred up by dramatic role play, their resolution does not take place in one or two sessions of intense emotional agitation and release. Even if you or your play partner has been trained to do therapy, neither of you, having played together, can ever be as neutral in expressing your feelings and behaviors as a therapist often must be; nor will either of you be available to the other on the kind of schedule a therapist provides without emotional reciprocation; nor should either of you have to bring your profession to your play time. Playroom activities are supposed to be *fun*, remember. If they *aren't* fun, you're probably doing something wrong.

Under the right circumstances virtually any activity can be *therapeutic*, which simply means it has some sort of healing or curative power. That's why overworked people and others who lead extremely stressful lives are often advised to take vacations, listen to soothing music, or go for long walks in the country; it's why people who feel so depressed they don't want to get out of bed may be told to take up gardening or to volunteer to help others; it's why lonely people who have little opportunity for social interaction may derive enormous emotional value from caring for their dogs and cats.

When we are overworked and relax, when we are depressed and become engaged in some activity, and when we are lonely and have something to love that is clearly happy to love us back, our attention is redirected away

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from our problems, and our immediate pains and anxieties often diminish. In the same way, a good whipping may help one person relax, or the opportunity to be served may take another person's mind off her troubles at the office. Since the people in these scenarios really do feel better we can quite legitimately say that some effects of the activities in question are healing, or therapeutic.

But these are simple interventions, in which a modest and usually limited result is sought from a modest and usually limited remedy. The simple nostrums for which we are all grateful function as a sort of psychic aspirin: they're sometimes excellent for the short-term relief of minor aches and pains, and often good as adjuncts to more intensive care; but they're generally ineffective for treating serious problems, and they have the potential to be dangerous if they're relied on to do the jobs that call for heavier medicine.

Most psychotherapy is a complex process that *concerns* a protracted period of time and *takes place* over a protracted period of time. It's made up of many interacting experiences, some simple, some complicated, some cleverly planned, some merely recognized and exercised when they happen by accident, some provoking pleasure, some even provoking interim distress. It is because of this complexity that people who plan to be therapists are usually advised not just to learn the theories and techniques relevant to their practice, but also, and perhaps most important, to undergo some serious therapy of their own.

Whether or not it's a medical process—some therapists think it is and others think it is not—psychotherapy involves an advisory art. Bill's therapist likened their work to a psychic archaeological dig. But it is also similar to the process of helping someone unwind and then reweave the tapestry of his life in order to discover exactly where, why, and how the woof got warped, the threads got inappropriately knotted, dye vats got used that were not planned for or ideal dyes were improperly mixed, and skeins were somehow slashed, mislabeled, or delivered in a confusing order.

In this process the therapist who guides and lends her insights may be an expert in deciphering the symbolic messages that appear in some tapestries, untangling twisted webs, recombining colors, patching tears

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together, rearranging shipments, and any number of other skills: it is partly for this expertise that she is hired. But the tapestry itself is the client's life, and the artist who signs the work—who is finally responsible for its reconstruction—is the client who comes to therapy.

In the process of therapy the client's special quirks are noted, identified, interpreted, and understood in the context of the work that is her life. As in all large creative efforts, one discovery often leads to another which leads to another which leads to another. When the discoveries and their connections are examined, some problems that prevented the tapestry from being what the artist intended may be undone and, to some extent, rewoven. Depending on the nature of those problems, the result may be a happier life for the client, or one that is less stressful, more exciting, more rewarding, more peaceful, more instructive, or simply richer in its quality and impact.

As an example of the way connections might be made in therapy, imagine you get angry with your lover of 10 years because for the first time in your relationship he is not at the restaurant where you thought you were supposed to meet him at the time you thought he was supposed to be there. Later you learn that he was at a different restaurant at the same time, or at the same restaurant an hour earlier. Your missed connection turns out to be the result of a simple miscommunication. But in the moment of feeling stood up you become enraged far beyond what the circumstances call for: you're even ready to end the relationship.

You bring the matter up next time you see your therapist, and as the two of you discuss the situation you find that being stood up reminds you of a whole string of broken promises made by a long-gone other lover, which lover, you suddenly remember in turn, wore the same after-shave your father wore; and the realization of this apparently insignificant connection reminds you of your father's deep betrayal of your trust when you were very young. Abruptly you are weeping uncontrollably and that grief is what contains the anger at your father you never allowed yourself to experience 20, 30, or 40 years ago, that has surfaced at last and been directed at your lover, who may be hurt, perplexed, or even angry that the first missed connection in a decade has brought the two of you to the brink of divorce.

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Exposing information which you would have previously hidden even from yourself will sometimes be of little consequence; other times it can lead to a profound reaction such as vividly re-experiencing an early betrayal. In psychotherapy there is a place to return again and again to pick apart the threads of feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and beliefs that led from the first betrayal to the most recent. Each incident may attach itself to others that do not appear, initially, to have anything to do with those you've found already, but in the psychotherapeutic context, which is specifically devoted to your self-discovery, you have the focused leisure to examine every thread that seems to matter to you.

As a client in psychotherapy you also have an assistant or a guide who, presumably, has picked apart her own tapestry enough to have some sense of what it feels like to make connections you've hidden from your own view all your life, and has sat with other people while they made the same sorts of discoveries you're confronting. Assuming your therapist is moderately competent, she is not going to think it's time to focus on *her* problems once you've spent a lot of time together hashing over *yours*. She is not going to leave you for being pissy, prissy, or pushy. She is not going to be defensive because you want to play with someone else. And she is going to function as the eyes in the back of your head to help you see what is usually out of your sight.

Moreover, your therapist is not involved with you in any other important way that gives her a personal stake in your decisions, and we should hope your lover or play partner is—even if, on her professional time, your lover is a therapist herself. If what you discover in therapy or elsewhere in your life leads you to believe you must be single for awhile, your lover has a stake in changing your mind but your therapist does not. If what you discover leads you to believe you must play more, less, all the time, or not at all, your play partner has an investment in your decision but your therapist does not. And if what you discover leads you to feel upset for a month or a year and makes you asocial or unbearable company until it's over, the good friend who likes to hold your hand is liable to get burned out and resentful, but your therapist is not.

The process of therapy is so intimate and so concerned with an energy exchange of its own, and the issue of trust is so important in the therapeutic relationship, that therapists of every license are specifically proscribed

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from being sexual with their clients. If *your* lover or play partner became *your* therapist (or if your therapist became your lover or play partner) she would be violating the ethical canons of every professional psychotherapy guild and could lose her license.

The dungeon is a *play* space for erotic partnerships where romantic and/or spiritual concerns may also be addressed. All participants have their own equally valid stakes in the process and the outcome, all participants seek to have their needs attended to, and on the happiest occasions all participants can have their wants addressed as well. Psychological issues may arise for any player, as such issues may arise for people anywhere, and if they can be handled in the scene or in straight time, well and good; if not there is still another recourse for the affected players that is likely to support, not damage, the people and their relationships because a therapist is, at least to a large extent, specifically neutral.

The consulting room, by contrast, is a *work* space for psychological partnerships where any sorts of concerns may also be addressed, and where all participants have the same stake in the process and the outcome, which is the client's best well-being.

We want to be present and available for our play partners, and we want them to be present and available for us. That's why we relate to them with both give and take in the dungeon, as well as at parties, at dinner, in the park, and anyplace else we like to be together. But while we want our therapists to be present and available to support us, we *don't* want to have to be present and available to support *them*. We don't want to take their psychological, emotional, or intellectual needs into consideration: that's part of why we pay them.

Recognizing that therapeutic effects may result from SM activities as they also may from swimming the English Channel, shopping for a car, or taking a nap, the goals and methods of SM are still different from the goals and methods of psychotherapy, as will be apparent if you think about asking your therapist for a flogging, or having her present her bill while collared and on her knees. The whip or the couch—it's really a matter of using the right tool for the right job.

How to Find an SM - Positive (or Neutral) Therapist

Who, What, When, Why

At the beginning of the 21st century many Americans visit a psychotherapist or other “mental health” counselor from time to time. Doing so no longer carries either the stigma or the romance it carried long ago: it does not mean you are deranged, nor does it place you at the cutting edge of radical, innovative artistic or intellectual thought. Instead, it is a fairly common way to get assistance when you want to look into your heart and mind, behind your head, and other places your own eyes cannot always see so well.

While people do sometimes consult therapists for help with very serious psychological matters, therapy has evolved in the past century and now also offers a wide array of options for healing major and minor emotional wounds, resolving personal crises or dilemmas, mediating difficulties in relationships, re-evaluating thought and behavioral priorities, gaining conscious insight into your own creative processes, and simply expanding awareness and self-knowledge in ways that enhance people’s capacities for happiness, satisfaction, love, and fulfillment. If and/or when you decide to seek this sort of counseling, you can be more successful if you know what you want to accomplish and how to shop for someone who can help.

Many BDSM players who have visited psychotherapists concerning anxiety, depression, relationship questions, and other issues more or less common to all humans, have encountered resistance from ignorant therapists who insisted that their sex life was their “real” problem. This kind of “BDSM-phobia” is not something you have to put up with, but you will be better equipped to avoid it and still get appropriate assistance when you want it if you know how to find a therapist who is willing and able to listen to you.

Under most circumstances a BDSM player does not necessarily need a psychotherapist who is personally experienced with BDSM. It is more important that the therapist you work with be familiar with the problems

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that beset you, whether those concern anxiety, depression, communication skills in the context of a relationship, questions of identity, substance abuse, sexual matters, parenting, coming out, how family structures work, coping with major illness or disability, or the way conflicts are likely to manifest on the job. Just as a gay or lesbian therapist can usually work quite well with a heterosexual client, and vice-versa, so a vanilla therapist can generally work with you.

On the other hand, psychotherapy can be a very intimate encounter all by itself, and the relationship you develop with your therapist, based as it is in trust, can be unusually important. Since a person's erotic mind-map may inform many other areas of her life, your work is liable to proceed more smoothly if you feel comfortable disclosing your sexual preference or lifestyle to this person, and if the person knows enough about human sexuality so s/he doesn't respond to your revelations with fear, or as if you were dangerous, immoral, insane, or some quaint curiosity for study.

Certainly there are times you want your therapist to see value in an activity you value, whether that is BDSM, meditating, butterfly collecting, or salsa dancing. Certainly also there are times you really do want your therapist to be familiar with BDSM language, processes, and protocols. And most certainly you never want to spend your time and dollars educating someone about what it is you do in the dungeon or the bedroom if you can find someone else equally right for you who is already kink-friendly, or who is at least willing get a few sessions of consultation himself from a BDSM-knowledgeable colleague.

But what matters most is that your therapist recognize and respect your values, rather than seek to impose his own on you. Under most circumstances, then, what you do need is someone who does not have a prejudice against BDSM, or at very least is able to set that prejudice aside and work with what is true for you.

For a longer look at this same question from a therapist who believes you really do need a kink-aware therapist, see "Psychotherapy & D/s" by Alan R. Meltzer, C.S.W., A.C.S.W., L.C.S.W., at www.subspace.cc/psychotherapy.htm.

How to Find Your First Therapist

Finding a therapist for the first time can be a little daunting, because without some prior experience of working with a counselor you may not quite know how to identify one who's right for you. Asking your friends for referrals can be a good place to start, if you are willing to tell them what you want, and if any of them has been in therapy and found the process beneficial.

While she might be happy to provide you with leads, however, your friend might or might not want you to see her therapist for any number of reasons. Some of those reasons make fairly obvious sense: if your friend is also your lover, for instance, she might feel her privacy could be jeopardized by sharing her therapist with you; and in any case the therapist would probably regard seeing you both in individual therapy as a conflict of interest. Some reasons are less apparent but no less potent: for example, people sometimes feel proprietary about their shrinks, especially while they're still in therapy, either because they don't want to bump into someone they know on the way in or out, or because they want to protect for themselves the intimacy that can grow up in a therapy relationship. But even if your friend is reluctant to share, she might still ask her therapist for the names of a few colleagues he respects, so you can have some small place to start.

In addition to friends' recommendations and what you glean from the grapevine, some therapists advertise in alternative newspapers and magazines, where costs are substantially lower than in the Yellow Pages or major media, and these days many therapists can be located through the internet, whether or not they have their own web sites. They may be listed on the sites of their professional guilds, for example, or through sites that feature their special areas of expertise.

A site that is nearly always of interest to people in the BDSM world is Kink Aware Professionals www.bannon.com/kap/. As we say in the Resources section of this book, KAP was established by the founder and original publisher of Daedalus Publishing Company as a kind of clearing house for therapists, doctors, lawyers, alternative healers, and others who offer professional services to our communities. It has expanded

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tremendously over the years, but the people listed on the site are not vetted in any way, so while you have some reason to expect that a professional who goes out of her way to be KAP-listed will be understanding when you talk about your lifestyle, that is not guaranteed. Read the entries critically and, as always, *caveat emptor*.

Even if you find answers to all your preliminary questions on the web there is no substitute for a person-to-person conversation, so whether the therapist requires it or not, try to arrange for a brief telephone interview before setting up your first appointment. Few experienced therapists will devote a lot of time to such a screening call, but the one you call should be willing to spend the few minutes it will take to answer the sorts of initial questions you might have, and to give you a general feel for the person and how s/he responds to you.

In your telephone interview you will not necessarily learn if this is the one and only therapist for you, but you should come away feeling satisfied that the person can be a likely candidate. You may want to find out if s/he has experience dealing with the issues you want to address, or how long s/he has been in practice. Some people want to know where a therapist was educated, whether s/he has ever been a client in therapy, how many people s/he has seen with a problem similar to the caller's, or why s/he chose this line of work. Some want to know a therapist's location, fees, or insurance policies. If your therapist's sexual orientation is genuinely important to you, including whether or not s/he is a player, ask, and explain to the therapist why you want to know. Therapists usually find personal questions inappropriate and may decline to answer them, but when your reasons are important to you they may be meaningful or even persuasive to the therapist, and just discussing them could enhance your dialogue.

In the long run these kinds of specifics are usually less important than whether you feel comfortable with a particular therapist. In any case, consider the questions you really need to have answered before you make your phone call, so you can get your answers without spending more time than necessary deciding whether you want to schedule a first meeting. And ask the questions that matter to you even if you think them silly. It's far better to feel silly about your questions before you start to work than it is to feel silly about your choice of therapist later.

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For further assistance in talking to a vanilla therapist, take a look at the advice Charles Moser offers to people seeking any sort of health care assistance in his book *Health Care Without Shame* (see Bibliography, p. 258). For a couple of related perspectives on bringing your more-or-less queer self to a therapeutic situation, see Marny Hall's book on gay therapy, *The Lavender Couch*, or Michael Bettinger's book on queer therapy, *It's Your Hour*, which includes a brief section on choosing an SM-positive therapist. You can find information for both books in the Resources section of this one, p.258.

Some varieties of psychotherapists

Terms of art like "counseling" and "therapy" are jealously protected by the guilds that "own" them by law, partly to protect their turf and partly because there is a great deal of legitimate training that goes into becoming eligible for one of the guild licenses. While there is no national standard in the districting of American psychotherapy, different States approve different licenses for clinical practice in different ways based on a therapist's specialized training, and the different guilds that oversee the practitioners of psychology in the consulting room or clinic require that people have different kinds of training to secure those licenses.

In California, for example, a clinical or counseling psychologist ordinarily holds an earned doctorate (Ph.D. or Psy.D.) in some relevant branch of psychology, such as counseling or development; has served an internship of 3000 hours supervised by a more experienced, licensed psychologist or psychiatrist; and has passed both written and oral examinations overseen by a State board of examiners. A marriage and family therapist may also hold an earned doctorate in psychology or a related field of social or behavioral science, but must hold at least an earned master's degree (M.A. or M.S.) in a relevant branch of psychology, often with special emphasis on interpersonal relationships; has served a similarly supervised internship of 3000 hours with a more experienced, licensed psychotherapist; and has passed both written and oral examinations overseen by a State board of examiners. A clinical social worker, like a marriage and family therapist,

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may hold an earned doctorate but must hold at least an earned M.A., M.S., or M.S.W., often with special emphasis on social service; has also served a 3000-hour supervised internship with a more experienced, licensed psychotherapist; and has passed both written and oral examinations overseen by a State board of examiners. A psychiatrist always holds an earned degree as a doctor of medicine (M.D.), and has served a hospital residency in psychiatry.

Designations within licenses often have nothing to do with the States and everything to do with specific guilds. For example, a psychoanalyst is traditionally a psychiatrist first, adheres at least nominally to Freud's theories, and has undergone her own "training analysis" with a more experienced psychoanalyst. An analytic psychologist is a psychotherapist who adheres particularly to Jung's theories and has undergone his own analysis with a more experienced analytic psychologist. Although there is no licensing requirement for other therapists to spend time as clients in therapy, most graduate schools that grant degrees leading to licensure do require about a year in counseling or therapy as part of a grad student's education.

Claiming to be psychotherapist without holding one of the relevant licenses is both illegal and a violation of psychotherapeutic ethics. Nonetheless, there are certification trainings in a wide variety of helping professions whose practitioners can provide highly valuable assistance when you are working with various questions, conditions, and difficulties. Often grouped together as "alternative" or "complementary" healing, these practices include nursing, clinical hypnosis, sex education, surrogate sexual partnering, pastoral or spiritual counseling, chiropractic and other forms of bodywork, Reiki and other forms of energy work, and coaching. If you prefer to work with an alternative healer rather than or in addition to a therapist when dealing with emotional, sexual, and/or psychological issues, approach the interview process in much the same way: learn what is important to you about the individual's training and experience, and make sure you feel comfortable with what s/he offers and how s/he delivers it.

Finding Others

The title for this section might have been "Finding Partners," but while we recognize that many people want play partners, romantic partners, or life partners, and may choose to search for any or all of these in the organized SM communities, we also see some value in broadening our outlook. After all, people are also looking for friends, mentors, and community.

Organizations

By now there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of large and small BDSM groups in the United States, and if you live in or near a large American city chances are excellent that one is based near you. Most of these organizations are staffed by volunteers, which means they may respond slowly to your inquiry; occasionally, if the person in charge of correspondence, voice mail, or e-mail is backed up till four years from Thursday, it means they won't respond at all. Don't take that sort of benign neglect personally if it falls on you: just remember, when you become a member of some such organization, how much other prospective members and an overburdened staff would value a contribution of your time and effort if and when you can spare it.

Because some groups come and go rather quickly, because other groups' addresses change periodically, and because this book's shelf-life is likely to be longer than the shelf-lives of those resources that update their information every month or quarter. We will not try to list all the educational, support, and contact organizations in the BDSM world. Instead, we'll list the few that are most prominent as of December, 2003, and trust that you can find your ways from there to the munch, class, conference, party, or playmate of your dreams.

1. National Leather Association International. NLA-I, P.O. Box 191362, Dallas, TX 75219, www.nla-i.com is the grandparent of the communities' political and educational efforts.

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2. The Eulenspiegel Society (TES), P.O. Box 2783, New York, NY 10163-2783 is the oldest BDSM organization in the country, founded in 1971. www.tes.org
3. The Society of Janus (SOJ), P.O. Box 426794, San Francisco, CA 94142-6794 is the second-oldest BDSM organization in the country, founded in 1974. www.soj.org
4. The Threshold Society, Inc., 12828 Victory Blvd, North Hollywood, CA 91606-3013, serves the greater Los Angeles area. www.threshold.org
5. APEX, P.O. Box 67532, Phoenix, AZ 85082-7532, tel 602-415-1123 for a recorded announcement of meeting times and places. www.arizonapowerexchange.org
6. Rocky Mountain Power Exchange serves Denver and environs. www.rmpe.org
7. Black Rose, P.O. Box 11161, Arlington, VA serves the Washington, D.C. area; tel 703-715-6507 for a recorded announcement of meeting times and places. For seven years BR has sponsored one of the major BDSM conferences and parties in the nation. www.br.org
8. The other major annual leather event in the United States these days is Thunder in the Mountains. www.thunderinthemountains.com

These clubs are pansexual in their orientation: they're open to gay, lesbian, heterosexual, bisexual, transgendered, and other people. But, like BDSM clubs in many parts of the country and the world, they are also turnstile organizations through which you can find men-only and women-only groups, or groups with other specifications such as heterosexual male-Top or heterosexual female-Top. Although it is true that leather transcends gender, gender, orientation, and other fetishes and preferences may not always transcend leather. If you're going to try to find yourself in these

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communities, you might as well make sure to find those parts of the larger communities in which you are most comfortable. To help you do that, and to help you locate wider and more up-to-date access, try *Leather Journal*: P.O. Box 381239, Hollywood, CA 90038-1239. The Journal charges \$39.95/year for its newspaper in the US and Canada, \$70/year elsewhere, though the number of issues/year is uncertain. The electronic version provides links to other organizations and a regularly updated calendar of more leather events around the nation than most people realize could possibly be taking place. www.theleatherjournal.com

Most SM organizations were not formed as sex clubs, dating clubs, or Lonely Hearts' organizations; they were founded, instead, to provide education and social support to, by, and for SM players. You will be more warmly welcomed when you attend these groups' meetings if you go with the intention of making friends of all genders and orientations than if you go just looking to score with the Mistress, Master, or slave of your fondest masturbatory dreams. This, alas, is particularly true if you're a heterosexual male, because there are more het males looking for partners in the SM communities than there are het females. We don't mean to discourage het males—remember, you're going to meetings to find like-minded people and to learn, not to score; you didn't forget *already*, did you?—but to remind everyone entering a new community to be gracious and polite, to learn, to pay back, and in general to act as if the subject matter were not sex but something more neutral, like cooking or atomic warfare.

If you make friends easily in other venues you'll probably make friends easily here. Yes, the people in SM organizations will accept your erotic fantasies and hopes more readily than people in most other places, but people are people anyway. If making friends is usually difficult for you, it may also be difficult for you here. In that case, consider listening to relevant self-help tapes, reading books such as Carol Queen's *Exhibitionism for the Shy* from Down There Press, 938 Howard Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, 800-289-8423 or working with a live human counselor to help you learn how to be more comfortable in social situations.

When you introduce yourself to some SM group, be honest about yourself and the experience you bring to your application or membership. If you're a shy novice, for instance, say so: there's no shame in either

condition, and *if* you want to change, telling the truth is usually a first step on the road to doing so. In any case, it's self-defeating to try to mislead people in a community whose primary espoused activity depends on people's abilities to trust one another. If your only SM experience has been online, and you've never actually touched or been touched by a whip, or touched a slave, don't pretend to a whipmaster's knowledge you can't possibly have gleaned in Virtual Reality, else your welcome will wear very thin very fast in the Real SM world. For a slightly longer introductory discussion about the pros and cons of cyberSM, read on.

BDSM Online

To play in the world of computer SM you need a computer, of course, as well as a modem, which is the instrument that allows you to connect your computer to others through a telephone line. These facts will probably remain true through most of the coming changes in computer use. Everything else that follows about "CyberSM" is true as of 1996, but could be outdated at any time. The Electronic Age is very much upon us, and it promises to shift everybody's experience far more quickly than the Industrial Age shifted our experience when it took over from the Agricultural Age that preceded it.

Thus we began our section on "Cyber SM" in this book's first edition, released in 1996. It is now 2003, seven years later; as we predicted, almost everything else we wrote about BDSM online is now out of date, as is our declaration about how to connect to the Internet and the World Wide Web. DSL and cable connections had not yet reached the general population in 1996, and we will not even try to predict how you will connect to the Internet and the World Wide Web in the future – or the 'net and the web as it is called these days – whatever it may be called.

At the end of 2003 Sybil spoke with John Warren, author of *The Loving Dominant*, and asked him if his pamphlet, "Kinky Computers: Finding D & S On On-Line Systems," was still in print in any version, or if he knew of anything else like it. His answer was a categorical *No*, because as soon as something like that is published it is out of date. The Internet is an ephemeral place and sites come and go at a rapid pace; and,

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unlike an out-of-print book you may find in a used book store, once a site is gone it is almost always truly gone.

None of the alt.newsgroups ever had a charter or definition of what was and wasn't acceptable to post, including alt.sex.bondage, so when alt.sex.bondage became completely overrun with advertising and spam, it was replaced with soc.subculture.bondage-bdsm.

The reason we mention alt.sex.bondage at all is that we particularly recommend to newbies its BDSM FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) list, also known as the ASB FAQ. This FAQ may now be found at various sites, such as www.unrealities.com/adult/ssbb/faq.htm#faqs; but if it's gone, just type into your search engine "alt.sex.bondage FAQ" in quotes as it is printed here, to locate some more sites.

Most people we know no longer use Usenet; they favor ICQ or IRC Channels, chat rooms, discussion boards found on various sites, and email lists found on Yahoo, Topica, or others recommended by their friends.

Just as what we called "CyberSM" in 1996 has changed enormously in just a few years, much more will change after this edition is published; inevitably, many of the online references will be quickly outdated.

So where is a new inquiring person to go online? Well, we are betting that search engines will persist for a while, and since google has become a verb, you can start by googling BDSM. Type "BDSM education" or "BDSM spanking" or "Fem Dom" or "Fem Domme" into www.google.com or some other search engine. Yes, you will come up with some porn sites, but you will also discover some educational sites as well, and some of those may lead to chat rooms, email lists, and other forms of VT (Virtual Time) BDSM, as opposed to RT (Real Time) BDSM. VT BDSM is online, of course, typing on your keyboard; RT is offline, with flesh and blood people.

For example, as of late 2003 you can go to www.ironrose.com (Iron Rose, "BDSM Education and Information is Our Passion") and start chatting with other people through their IRC Channel or ICQ contact list; you will find resources of email groups you can join for support, newsletters you can receive for free, adult search engines, links for free kinky personals sites, and many other free fun and educational links that will lead you to other sites that link to others, on and on.

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BBSs (Bulletin Board Systems), where you typed your message and then sent it off to be read later by others, have been replaced by email lists. Some of these lists, hosted by Yahoo, Topica, or another portal website, may be available to the world at large, others may be invitation or nomination only. Smaller and more private lists are almost always available only by invitation or nomination.

If you have access to the global Internet, either directly or through any of the major online services (see below) you can locate a large number of news groups under the *alt.sex.* heading.

When you enter any chat room, join any lists, or participate online in any way, read what other people have posted, introduce yourself, let people know your interests and level of experience, ask questions, contribute your own thoughts, and see what develops. As ever, honesty will stand you in better stead over the long haul than dishonesty, even if dishonesty occasionally seems more appealing in the short term.

When you post you don't always know who will read them. Although confidentiality is required from participants, it is possible your post will be forwarded. Thus, we believe in being very careful. Especially if they're very personal and/or opinionated, write out your messages and save them for a day or two so you can re-read them yourself before sending them out. You won't want to learn later that in the heat of a lusty moment you put out information you regret having told *anyone*, let alone *everyone*. By the same token, keep your online sex life out of the office, just as you would your material sex life. If you have a corporate account at work, for example, don't use it to go to sex and/or BDSM websites, kinky lists, etc. unless you have a *supremely* understanding boss who has already approved your practice. Most companies now routinely use software to monitor your online use.

People often use virtual sex to try out new roles, fantasies, or presentations, since you can be anyone or anything you want in virtual sex. Since the virtual world is a verbal world only, with no physical cues to guide you, you can also use virtual sex to sharpen your negotiation skills: you have to learn to be exact and complete in your statements or you and your partners will be misled and mired in confusion. If you're intelligent and reasonably good with words, you can be a star online—but remember: it isn't the real world.

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As long as you remain online, virtual sex can be both safe and unsafe: safe not only because STDs cannot yet be communicated electronically, but because no one knows your identity – although it is getting easier all the time for a diligent person to find it out; and unsafe because, of course, you don't know their identities. It is all too easy to lie about who and what you are when no one can see you as you are typing away. Men can become beautiful Mistresses and any newbie can quickly become a long-time, experienced Master with a stable of slaves. In addition:

- Do not give out your real name, home and/or work phone number, personal email address, home address, etc., but rather create a “nic” (nickname) and a Yahoo, Hotmail, or other free and/or anonymous email account.
- If you have a sensitive job, and/or are concerned about privacy, check out the turf before outing yourself into SM. Be vague or nondescript at first. Learn the net *process* in innocuous chatrooms before you go looking for the sex/BDSM chat rooms; and while you're chatting about grooming standard poodles, don't out yourself as a Mistress looking for a few good slaves. You'll have plenty of opportunity to be as specific and descriptive as you want to be later, *when* you reach the BDSM chat rooms and *if* you meet someone with whom you want to become intimate, or if you learn how to be anonymous online.
- Avoid flame wars. A flame war is a set of escalating arguments and/or insults people fling back and forth across cyberspace that won't really get you anywhere unless you enjoy a bout of verbal pugnacity. You can identify a flame war by a long series of postings that begin “RE:” This is the sign of referral to previous postings, and while some long lists of RE: may embody philosophical discussions you'd be happy to join, many do not; it is always acceptable not to respond to an insult.
- And if you're new to being online, ask for leads and tips from your friends who are already websmart.

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When you are online as elsewhere, it is always appropriate to follow the ordinary rules of polite social intercourse:

- know where you're going before you set out;
- be friendly;
- be honest: *don't* be a pretender;
- don't take yourself—or anyone else, or anything else—too seriously;
- keep yourself safe;
- don't get loaded before you join a discussion: as a friend of ours once said, "Don't drink and type."
- make some online buddies;
- follow these rules for meeting new players (these will be covered again when we discuss Personal Ads below):
 - talk on the phone before you meet;
 - have your first face-to-face meeting in an open, public space;
 - do *not* play or plan to play on your first date;
 - don't fall into a power imbalance before or during negotiations;
- Be thoughtful about how you play online, and be very, very careful should you decide to meet someone you meet online live and in person. If at all possible, check out the person's reputation as a player in the community before you meet just as you would do if you had met in real time.
- Be wary of anyone who calls him/her self a "true" Dom/me, or

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states that there is only one way (almost always his or hers) to be submissive or Dominant.

- If at all possible, meet live people through organizations, munches, and conferences.
- remember to institute a silent alarm
- finally, don't let the internet rule your life.

For additional information about CyberSM, take a look at *Kinky Computers: Finding D & S On On-Line Systems*, by Mentor, listed in our Bibliography.

Personal Ads

Even now, at the dawn of our electronic era, most cities still can claim at least one daily newspaper. In San Francisco, where we live and work, there is one major morning daily (the *Chronicle*) and two free, nominally independent infomercial papers, *The Examiner* and *The Independent*. These newspapers, like their similar numbers elsewhere, all publish Classified Ads, and like nearly all other big-city newspapers, their Classified sections include a subsection called something like "Personals."

In addition, like other cities, San Francisco contains numerous subcommunities large enough to support one or more papers of their own. For example, we have two general-interest weeklies loosely devoted to alternative politics (the *Bay Guardian* and *S.F. Weekly*), and another specifically concerned with sex news and reviews (the largely heterosexual and very SM-friendly *Spectator*); one weekly paper keyed specifically to the gay male population (the *Bay Area Reporter*); one biweekly paper aimed chiefly at the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered community (*Bay Times*); as well as a host of supplemental neighborhood, special-interest and advertising tabloids (e.g., *Court Recorder*, *Advertising News*). Except for the *Chronicle*, and *Spectator*, all these papers are free to consumers: the publishers make their money selling advertising space, and some of the

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ad space they sell, of course, is for Personals.

Personal Ads have become far more than a modern Lonely Hearts forum: they've become a meeting ground that is neither Virtual nor Real. Especially in our conservative era when people in power are muttering about repressing sexual freedoms, some newspaper editors are chary about publishing ads with a sexual thrust in their Personals columns; others who don't object to sex do have policies against carrying ads with an SM orientation; still others don't care what an ad says as long as it isn't illegal. Before you answer any Personal Ad, therefore, read through your particular paper's Personals a few times to note whatever disclaimers and explanations it may offer about its ad policy. That way you'll know whether you can expect explicit statements of SM interest, or should look for clearly identified code words or abbreviations, or will have to read between the lines for some special nuances, or might as well simply look elsewhere. Obviously, it will also be important to know your paper's guidelines if you're *writing* an ad to place there.

Whether you're placing a Personal Ad or answering one, be honest about your interests and intentions. After all, your purpose is to meet and come to know someone in some intimate ways, and deception is hardly a solid foundation on which to build *any* kind of relationship.

Even though we exhort people to be honest in their presentations, we know that not everybody follows our sage counsel. In ads, as in online contacts, people can and sometimes do misrepresent themselves. A telephone conversation as an ad-answering follow-up can clarify each party's idea of the other, but be as cautious handing out your home phone number or other identifying personal data to strangers as you would be in other circumstances. Just because someone claims she wants you to tie her up does not mean she is who or what she represents herself to be; several lesbian chat lines are famous for the presence of heterosexual men who think they're fooling the other users. If you have a telephone call that goes well you might propose or accept a brief meeting in a neutral, open, public space such as a museum or a cafe. A dinner date may be both longer and more suggestive than you want your first meeting to be when you finally get together face-to-face, and there's always another night.

As we've said before, don't play or plan to play on your first date, and

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negotiate—when you negotiate—as equals: don't let a power imbalance creep into your first meeting. Some Tops may start calling a prospective playmate "slave" even before their negotiations have begun, as some bottoms may start to call a prospective Top Master or Mistress. This behavior, as you may recall, is a mark of Top's or bottom's disease, or of ignorance; it is certainly playing without consent. If someone behaves this way with you, call him on it immediately; if he persists, terminate your meeting: you have no idea what else he'll do without consent.

Other Places to Meet People

Leather Events

The leather community is now a nation and worldwide group. At the time of this revision, in the fall of 2003, this wide community hosts many different kinds of BDSM/leather social events including conferences, fetish flea markets, weekend camping excursions, weekend boot camps, fetish balls, leather auctions (both slave and otherwise), leather contests, munches, parties, and BDSM fund raisers. Leather conferences, such as Denver's "Thunder In the Mountains," various Leatherfests and Kinkfests, and Washington, D.C.'s "Black Rose" Conference or the San Diego Leatherfest, generally run through a long weekend, with registration beginning Thursday or Friday and ending with one or more play parties. These events include classes, demonstrations, vendor displays where goods relevant to community members are sold, awards ceremonies, and SM play parties sprinkled throughout that vary from event to event. This list of conferences is not meant to be complete in any way. Conferences come and go and some that went return.

Leather contests are social events too, but that is not all they are. The winners of the various contests are known as titleholders. They spend a year or more making personal appearances around the country educating people about the leather lifestyle and raising consciousness and additional funds for people and organizations such as those in the leather and AIDS communities.

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In addition, the contests themselves function as fund-raisers for the leather community as a whole, or for specific purposes: during the 1990s, for example, many groups held small auctions and other events to raise money for the defense of Spanner, a group of gay male English leathermen who had been arrested at a party and imprisoned for their consensual play on the grounds that the Tops had assaulted the bottoms, and that the bottoms had no right to consent to their own abuse. It is, of course, backward and ignorant decisions such as the one upheld by British law that makes people who desire liberty oppose government actions even when they would prefer to support their government.

Many local clubs, such as those listed in the *Leather Journal*, (www.theleatherjournal.com) combine social and educational functions by including an instructional program in a social evening; some clubs also throw play parties at other times. In some cities there are bars that cater to the leather community. Usually these are gay male bars, but not always; and in some gay male leather bars, leatherwomen are also welcome. In these bars the range of play experience is extremely wide and varied. Just because someone owns a large quantity of high-class leather does not mean that he or she is a serious player. For such people S & M may only mean Stand and Model, so don't make assumptions based solely on appearances.

Society at Large

It is harder to introduce a vanilla person to the SM world than it is to meet someone already involved with SM. Because we are dealing with unique and highly personalized erotic needs and desires, however, it can also be difficult to match one interest with another even *in* the leather world. One essential component of solving the almost inevitable riddles that result is to remain flexible. We don't mean that you should ever compromise your integrity, ignore your limits, or say you like an activity you do not like in order to accommodate someone else: we only encourage people not to be rigid unnecessarily, and to be willing to explore new options and to expand their erotic horizons.

If you meet someone you want to know better personally, romantically, and/or erotically while you're in your own vanilla world—at work, at

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school, at the Single Parents' PTA Picnic—consider how important SM, DS, or your particular fetish is to you. If you begin gently you may be able to introduce the other person to your erotic world either through other kinds of sex play—light crossdressing, sexy clothing, or adult videos—or even by trying some mild role play or games of light spank and tickle. But if this person has no interest in SM or even finds the thought of it distasteful, you will have some soul-searching to do and some decisions to make. For example, could you live without your erotic play, or without exploring it further than you have? If not, and if this person became important to you, would you try to lead a double life, secret or otherwise? How would you handle such a difficult conundrum?

We are not going to try to answer these and their myriad related questions for you, here or elsewhere: the choices will be yours, should the need for choices arise. But if SM is or becomes an important feature of your erotic life, they may have to be addressed. It is for this reason among others that we said early in this book that much of what takes place in the SM world begins with the Delphic Oracle's teaching: Know Thyself.

How to Decide Whether or Not to Play with Someone New to You

Whether you're new or an old hand at this game, if you have access to other people who share your interest in erotic energy exchange you will someday meet or hear about some new someone who appeals to you as a prospective play partner. But not everyone who can swing a whip or take one was designed by the creator of the universe to be the—or a—Top or bottom in your life.

Because SM is not *just* the same old dating game with which most adults are overly familiar, it helps to have a few guidelines when you're trying to decide if this or that stud muffin is really a person you want dangling from your chandelier. In addition to whatever you usually do to determine a prospect's prospects, therefore, here are a few of those guidelines for separating the potential wheat from the potential chaff. The guidelines are applicable to any player contemplating a new play partner,

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but they are especially valuable for a bottom evaluating a Top, since it's the bottom who's most likely to find himself tied, bound, blindfolded, and gagged at the command and whim of Mr. and/or Ms. Anonymous.

To protect yourself and the scene you hope to have, you can ask your prospective play partner yourself, or you can ask others who know her, or both, but before you negotiate to play, find out:

- How long has the person been playing? Some people like to play with novices and some do not, so we don't propose this guideline to promote any kind of value judgment. We propose it, rather, because experienced players are more likely than inexperienced players to be technically adept, and to have a keener sense of what is liable to work in a scene and what is not.
- How long has the person been in the scene? Being in the scene, or participating in the organized SM community, is different from simply playing. Many people and couples play in isolation either by choice or by circumstance. But within the community educational and social opportunities are available to increase the likelihood that someone who participates in an active way will be conversant with the protocol and jargon of the SM world, including relatively refined negotiating, playing, and safety skills.
- What relevant organizations does the person belong to? That someone belongs to a dozen SM support groups does not guarantee that he knows more or better than someone who belongs to none, but because most such groups feature educational programs and other activities where people can learn to play both by example and by practice, belonging considerably improves the odds that someone will be SM knowledgeable.
- What is the individual's attitude toward the playing role you prefer? Some Tops really hold bottoms in contempt, so if you define as a bottom, or want to bottom to such a person, you might rethink your interest, or else rethink your self-assessment. Some bottoms resent Tops, so if you want to Top the same caveat applies.

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- How does your whiphrob feel about safewords? Certainly there are people who play safely without safewords, but usually these are people who have been around the scene for a long time and have known their play partners for a long time as well. We do not countenance playing without clearly defined limits for new players or for players new to one another.
- Why does this person want to play with me in particular—and why do I want to play with her? For a scene to go really well all parties need to get their needs met, and probably some of their wants as well. To enter into a scene without some clear sense of what you expect *from* your play partner and what you expect to offer *to* him, is to ask for a bad or boring scene. What your needs and wants may be—pleasure, knowledge, some kind of experience—almost doesn't matter, as long as you know what they are, know what the other person's are, and can negotiate for your scene with all that information on the table.
- Ask people who know the person about her reputation as a player. Watch the person play if possible, as you can usually do at a play party. There are plenty of people whose reputations far exceed their real abilities, just as there are consummately gifted players who are shy or private and keep their lights hidden. The more first-hand information you can gather, the more accurate your assessments can be, especially since people play differently under different circumstances or with different partners. Sybil once talked with a novice bottom who wanted to play with her but felt he couldn't, because he'd seen her whip someone very severely. As she noted to him, however, that was how she played with the first person, not how she would play with him: every person is an individual, and has the right to be treated as such. Besides, the demanding attitude a submissive craves in her scene Top may not be what she wants at all when it's time to have dinner or do the laundry.

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We don't want to scare anyone unnecessarily, but particularly if you're the submissive who may get tied up and gagged, going off to a private, intimate encounter with a virtual stranger does entail risks since *any* unknown person may surprise you with a capacity to turn. Therefore, if and/or when you do decide to play, consider establishing a silent alarm: tell a friend where you'll be in advance, and agree to call her at a specific time. If you do not call at that time, she agrees to come and get you.

A great deal has already been written about the ins and outs of using contact media, and if you plan to use them you should avail yourself of the available information. Jay Wiseman goes into some detail about silent alarms in *SM 101: A Realistic Introduction*, and John Warren offers additional insights in his book *The Loving Dominant* in his chapters "Stalking the Wild Submissive" (also good for stalking the wild dominant), "Winning Over the Vanilla Lover or Spouse," and Appendix A, "Where to Find What."

Elementary Social Skills for Players

Both inside and outside the organized SM communities some people have refined their social skills through extensive experience interacting with others, and some people have had relatively little exposure in these areas. But basic social skills are important for anyone who wants to build respectful relationships, and they are critical if those relationships are to be intimate and erotic, as most SM interactions require.

If you are a person who makes and keeps friends easily, who is comfortable in large and small groups, and who still enjoys her own company, you may find our basic social skills suggestions to be superfluous. If you find social intercourse difficult, however, you may find that the same suggestions help you to enrich your social life.

Whoever *you* may be, however, *we* are neither Emily Post nor Miss Manners: we do not presume to lay down or even interpret the law about how people should or should not behave in public. But since we have

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spoken with many people who turned out to appreciate some gentle reminders about these matters, we offer some simple points of ordinary etiquette that may improve your chances for meeting other folks who want to play, for playing with them, and for enjoying connections, friendships, and intimate relationships with others who share your predilections.

Before going to a party, meeting, or play date remember to:

- bathe;
- brush your teeth;
- clean and trim your nails;
- wash and brush your hair;
- wear clean clothes.

At the event:

- dress appropriately: you wouldn't wear full leather drag to a senior prom or a corporate board meeting, nor—unless it's specifically part of a very perverse scene—would you be likely to wear your tennis outfit or office uniform to an SM play party. When in doubt it is almost always appropriate to attend SM events in black; since customs vary, and since few people attend classes or support group meetings in full fetish attire, try basic black for your first SM event and gauge your local style;
- remember how your grandmother told you to always wear clean underpants in case you were in an automobile wreck and the police had to take you to the hospital where some orderly, nurse, or physician might undress you and see—if they were dirty—your shame? Well, something similar holds true here: if you plan or hope to play, wear sexy, or at least clean, undergarments: they may become visible;

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- check out signals from other people: the vocabulary you've learned, even from us, is not necessarily the only right one; if you are unsure, or if doubt might be appropriate, ask for verification or interpretation if necessary; don't be a slave to the signals you've learned or to what you think you know;
- ask first, act later, don't presume; for instance, don't throw yourself at or on anyone with whom you have not previously negotiated for such behavior;
- except in a negotiated scene where some other safeword has been established, believe that *no* means *no*;
- go slowly—especially if you're playing with a novice or you are one;
- volunteer if appropriate; the organizers of many meetings and parties need people to help set up and break down, and if you offer to be one such person your efforts are likely to be noticed and appreciated; volunteering also gives you a purpose at an event so you don't have to stand around feeling anxious; it's often a helpful ice-breaker as well.

As we say, if these suggestions seem unnecessary to you, skip them. If, on the other hand, they seem useful, use them with our blessings.

Dungeon Etiquette

SM play parties may be held in private homes or they may be held in larger spaces under the auspices of one or more individuals or groups. Such play spaces are generally called dungeons, playrooms, or, in the older parlance, blackrooms. There are proper and improper ways to behave in dungeons and at play parties. To some extent, different parties have different rules, which may depend on identifiable variables, such as

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- whether the party is small (two-four couples) or large (100-200 people);
- the experience of the players, ranging from all novices to all advanced to mixed;
- whether the party is heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bi, or mixed in any configuration;
- whether the pairings are male-dominant, female-dominant, or mixed.

But however rules may vary from party to party, some rules are pretty standard.

1. Do not interrupt another person's scene. If you have not expressly been invited to participate, do not intrude. At most parties you are welcome to watch other peoples' scenes as long as you don't interfere: don't stand too close, don't talk in a voice the players can hear, don't ask questions of the players, don't involve yourself in any way, and leave if you're asked to do so. When watching a whipping scene be aware of where the whip goes on its backswing so you neither interfere with anyone's aim, nor get hit yourself by accident.
2. Be polite at all times. Being a Top does not give you the right to be rude, pushy, or nonconsensually domineering; being a bottom does not mean anyone has any obligation to Top you.
3. Most large parties and many small ones provide written or printed rules for players. These rules are the non-negotiable needs of the party organizers and deserve the same respect you'd accord the non-negotiable needs of your play partners. Read them, make sure you understand them, ask questions of the party organizers if you do not, and obey them.

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From time to time you may find some party rules too confining for your tastes. For example, most public parties require everyone who is being sexual to practice safer sex techniques; monogamous couples in long-term relationships who are playing together exclusively are not exempt from this rule if for no other reason than to prevent the party rules from being two-tiered, and thereby to support those people at the party who are *not* so bonded to play safely. Or: some parties do not permit blood sports or other forms of edge play, and you will not be excused from this rule even if you're a police officer, a surgeon, or a famous SM titleholder, if for no other reason than that people who attend such a party do so with the understanding that they will be spared gory details.

4. Don't touch other peoples' property—material or human—without express permission from the owner.
5. Especially at a crowded party, don't sit, lounge, or store goods on bondage furniture (tables, stocks, etc.) that is not in use unless you're planning to use it soon: someone else may want it.
6. Don't carry on non-scene conversations in the dungeon. Hearing you jaw about your latest stock market bonanza or fiasco while flogging or getting flogged will be a distinctly distracting, unerotic experience.
7. Be respectful of other scenes in progress when you play. Try not to crowd other players, and make sure it's all right with the party organizers if your scene will be especially loud (if you plan to have a military training scene with a screaming Drill Instructor, for instance), unruly (if you plan a wrestling or a resistance scene), or intense (such as a blood scene or a scene of such heavy flagellation that welting, deep bruising, and/or cutting might occur).
8. Don't leave a mess. Use a sheet or tarp underneath your scene if appropriate, and clean up completely afterwards. If you spill something clean it up immediately. If your scene involves waxing,

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shaving, blood sports, or anything that may leave debris behind, ask permission from the party organizers before you begin.

9. Most SM play parties have dungeon monitors (DM) who are charged with protecting the space by making sure that scenes proceed safely and consensually, and that all house rules are obeyed. If a DM asks you to stop something you're doing, stop. Don't argue with her, especially in the dungeon. If you feel you *must* discuss the DM's decision, do so away from the play area where your conversation will not disturb other players. Whether you feel you're right or wrong—whether you *are* right or wrong—abide by the DM's decision. If you still feel you must dispute it after talking with the DM, discuss it with the party hosts *after* the party.
10. If you are concerned about the safety of someone not in your scene, find a DM and ask him to investigate. Do not enter the scene yourself.
11. Remember that a party is made up of individuals with a wide range of play styles and, usually, an equally wide range of experience. Don't be quick to judge other peoples' play based on what you know or how you play. If you have questions, don't interrupt a scene: just ask a DM during the scene, or ask the other players when they're through.
12. If you cannot abide by the house rules, whatever they may be, don't argue with the hosts or sneak around looking for ways to Top from the bottom by bending whichever rules you don't particularly care for. Such a violation of trust will only mean that the party organizers will have to ask you to leave, and you may be excluded from future events. Instead, leave the party graciously, or don't attend in the first place.

SM Scenes

A Brief Overview of Setting up a Scene

SM scenes begin like any other interactions between people: you meet somehow, recognize a mutual attraction, talk and discover that you have a common interest in some pastime, and decide to try enjoying your hobby together. You've done this a dozen times before: it's how you met your bridge partner, your golfing buddy, the members of your bowling league, or your spouse.

An SM scene is different from these other pursuits by the nature of its content, of course, and different players feel different components are critical if a scene is to run smoothly for them. But the only common elements that are absolutely essential are:

- communication about what each player needs and wants;
- consent from each player to the rules of the game;
- enough knowledge of safety so that no one is harmed;
- mutual trust; and
- a willingness to have erotic fun.

We've already discussed communicating about your wants and needs, and we've talked a good deal about consent. Here we add that for a scene to work consent includes agreement about who is Top and who is bottom, the nature of those roles, and the general nature of the scene you plan. We offer fundamental safety information in "SM Safety," beginning on page 162. But trust, the process of the scene, and the pleasure you have rest entirely in your hands.

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Every scene has some sort of form. The form your scenes take will reflect something of you and something of the person or persons with whom you play.

Rather like a spiritual service, our own scenes generally start *after* thorough negotiations with a kind of induction: a collaring ritual in which the bottom kneels while the Top places a collar around the bottom's neck to establish their roles, and the bottom agrees to adhere to the rules the Top establishes for that scene. We generally end scenes with a parallel de-collaring ritual in which the bottom kneels again while the Top removes the collar, and reminds both players that the scene is over and both people are to resume their roles as equal human beings. If the bottom is a baby the Top may have a special t-shirt for her that signifies her role; a dog collar can identify a dog bottom; if the scene concerns resistance the Top might leave the room and have the scene commence when she returns. Other opening and closing rituals are also possible, and as you play you'll doubtless create your own.

Chances are you already have some scenarios in mind that you'd like to try: you may have used them as masturbation material for years, only waiting for the chance to act them out. If not, or if you want to prime your pump with some other folks' ideas, you can find realistic sample scenes in *Learning the Ropes*, by Race Bannon, *Sensuous Magic*, by Patrick Califia, *The Sexually Dominant Woman*, by Lady Green, and John Warren's *Safe, Sane, Consensual, and Fun*. There are plausible longer-term scenarios in the Samois anthology *Coming to Power*. You can expand your repertoire of exotic, implausible SM erotica with the scenes you'll find lovingly described in the Beauty series by A. N. Roquelaure. These titles are all listed in our Bibliography, beginning on page 232.

Two People Playing Together for the First Time

Some of the suggestions in the next few pages may be useful to experienced players as well, but if two people playing together are both novices it's generally wise to start simply and proceed slowly. The first

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scene is not the time to try to realize every long-held fantasy at once, and combining pain with bondage with training may be far too much for a novice to process.

Instead, try one kind of sensation at a time, or explore one facet of this complex world at a time. Try a bit of breast bondage; see if the Top can teach the bottom how to rub her feet just the way she likes, and if the bottom can learn; try a light spanking. Play with one activity until you both feel comfortable with it. Then try another. Then another. After a few sessions you may feel sufficiently satisfied with your skills to combine some parts of what you know with some other parts, as if you're putting together a seven-course meal at a Chinese restaurant.

SM *is* like a meal in some ways: you can have a quick but delicious snack, you can pace yourself through a leisurely dinner with your most entertaining companion, or you can stuff yourself with too much banquet. And like a good cook, a skilled SM practitioner knows his ingredients and implements, and has some idea who is going to eat what he prepares. As it takes time to learn to be a great chef, so it takes time to master the arts of SM.

We've already discussed negotiating and preparing to play, so we'll move on now to what happens next: Play. Don't take yourselves or each other too seriously to have a good time. Forgive yourselves and each other if things don't go precisely the way you thought and hoped they would, and don't become enraptured by your fantasies if they do. A few hours and/or a few days after your scene, follow up in person or by phone to discuss what worked and what didn't work, what you liked and what you didn't like, what you'd change, what you'd like to do again, what you'd like *not* to do again, and what you'd like to try next time, if there's going to be a next time.

Telling someone what you liked is usually easier than telling him what you didn't like, though some people certainly have difficulty talking or hearing about what they *do* like. But it's important to talk about what worked, both as a way to support your fellow novice on his path of learning and to make it more likely that you'll get some more of what you liked next time you play. It's also necessary to talk about what didn't work, and however hard it may be to give voice to what we like, people

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frequently have more difficulty voicing the constructive critical comments that can really make it possible for the other person to improve her skills by knowing what she did that didn't work.

Neither player needs to criticize the other in order to express herself honestly, since you can certainly inform someone about your experience without passing judgment. For example, if you bottomed and found the experience of being spanked distinctly unpleasant and painful, you don't have to say, "I hated the spanking because you were too heavy-handed." Instead try something like, "I can give more of myself if you approach me more gently next time, and warm me up longer when you spank me." On the other hand, if you learn in your scene that spanking just is not your cup of tea you can always say, "Thanks for the spanking, you helped me learn that I really don't like this form of play. What else can we try?"

If you Topped and found the spanking scene unsatisfactory, you really don't have to say, "Spanking you is certainly a drag, I had to force you to make any noise at all!" Instead you can offer something like, "I can get a better sense of where the spanking is taking you if you give me a little feedback while we play, which is why I told you to make a noise on each outward breath."

With these sorts of explanations there is no blame on either side and you increase your odds of having a more successful scene the next time you play, with this or any other partner. Moreover, this kind of information *must* be exchanged if both of you are to grow and not repeat mistakes over and over again until they become bad habits.

Experienced Players Playing Together for the Nth Time

Even partners in the best-established couple should check in with one another before a scene begins. Health issues may be different than they were when you last talked, as may psychological or logistical ones. A bottom's pain tolerance and a Top's stamina can vary widely from day to day, and it's valuable for everybody to have the opportunity to let go of the workaday world before slipping into something . . . comfortable.

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By the same token, a post-scene check-in is never out of place no matter how long you've been playing together. If both of you have nothing to say except "Mmmm," well and good. Everyone likes to hear a little "Mmmm" from time to time. And if either of you has something more to say, a routine that includes this piece of communication will make saying it easier than if the only time you have this kind of talk is when you're on the brink of disaster. Life is not static, so you can support your growth and the growth of your partner by remaining open to the possibility of change.

Monogamous SM Relationships

You don't have to be polyamorous to participate in the extensive numbers of munches, conferences, classes, meetings, and play parties BDSM communities sponsor these days. It is perfectly acceptable to be monogamous, whether you identify as lesbian, gay, bi, transsexual, and/or heterosexual, even though it may sometimes seem otherwise.

In our society, married and otherwise committed partners have not generally waved their sexual lives around in front of others. Even the highly public gay liberation was not so much a movement about what people did in bed as it was a movement about their rights to be who they were; and it was finally gay people's sexual identities rather than their sexual practices that inflamed the indignation of other people who felt their own prejudices challenged, and that led, for a few benighted years at the turn of the century, to the American military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy that looked so silly to many on the outside, and felt so deadly to many on the in.

Some exceptions to this convention of discretion were highly visible in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when all sorts of sexual education and liberation movements were prominent, and groups of swingers and "wife-swappers" were featured in major national magazines and television shows.

The nation's first organized SM communities, such as The Eulenspiegel Society in New York City (founded 1971) and The Society of Janus in San Francisco (founded 1974) were part of this liberation movement.

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They were composed largely of people who did not feel themselves to be exclusively partnered, many of whom were gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and some of whom were swingers. Since education and support were chief among these early SM groups' avowed purposes, both instructional classes and social get-togethers, including parties, were important to their functioning. The people who took the classes and attended the parties shared their interests and became the community, and so the public face of BDSM was, and to a large extent still is, a community face.

It may be that the organized BDSM communities' origins in the sexual revolutions of the times imbued most of our early publications with some unspoken assumptions of their own, because looking back on early issues of Eulenspiegel's magazine *Prometheus*, Janus's newsletter *Growing Pains*, the gay SM how-to journal *Dungeon Master* and its pansexual sister publication *The Sandmutopia Guardian*, or books such as Larry Townsend's *The Leatherman's Handbook* (1974), Samois' *Coming to Power* (1982), or Geoff Mains' *Urban Aborigines* (1984), it is hard to dispel the feeling that the emergence of BDSM practice into the public eye was chiefly or even exclusively a *community* experience. The publications seem to suggest that everyone was doing anyone and vice-versa, and that whether things happened at a party or in someone's bedroom, whatever merry old times were being had were forever being had in the company, with the active participation, or at least with the congratulatory knowledge of dozens of other happily consenting familiars.

For many people who were parts of those communities the publications ring true: sex was not necessarily either a private or an exclusive act, and the very highly charged sexual theatre of SM was specifically an *inclusive public* act. In that sense the personal was political, which was yet another way the social community was in step with its times. The leather contests with their titles and sashes furthered the notion of community, and from the Mr. Drummer fantasies, to the social awareness AIDS built into International Mr. Leather, on to the sexual politics of International Ms. Leather, they helped to build a cohesion that allowed sometimes very disparate people to educate themselves and each other until for some people BDSM began to look like a sexual orientation all its own. Observing, for example, that some gay people preferred SM with people who were het

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to genital sex with people of their own male/female orientation – and vice-versa – Charles Moser, M.D., proposed to the American Psychiatric Association that the entire category of “paraphilias” that includes Sexual Sadism and Sexual Masochism be removed from future editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. (To read his paper go to <http://home.netcom.com/~docx2/mk.html>)

Sometimes lost in all the revolutionary excitement were the people for whom SM was neither a public nor a broadly shared activity, but was a consciously chosen and deeply committed monogamous lifestyle. Such couples might express themselves in the stylized discretion of a Roissy love affair or a Victorian Drawing Room drama, rather than with the trappings of Old Guard Leather, or they might live out a marriage of domestic discipline in urban lofts or the gray flannel suburbs of Corporate Bedroom Modern. But even without the convenient labels evolved from community life, the histories of B&D, D&S, and S&M are many centuries old.

Apart from the unconscious and non-consensual status quo of stereotypical heterosexual male-superior marriage, a surprising number of conscious and consensual couples live, and apparently have long lived, in exclusive marriages where one partner, male or female, was explicitly dominant and the other, male or female, explicitly subservient; where rituals were followed, commands were issued, and obedience was expected; and where infractions or disobedience were met with discipline and punishment, to both parties' satisfaction and – often, at least – erotic delight. In 2003 a book was even published on this very subject: Jack Rinella's *Partners in Power* (see Bibliography).

Whether we are in a community or not, whether we are public or private, whether we are exclusive or inclusive in our BDSM activities, it is our feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that express us, and not the labels we or other people might apply to us. Each of us, whether vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, or tutti-fruitti, has needs that are uniquely ours, and desires other people would regard as peculiar. When we find someone with whom we make enough of a match to go forward, we will necessarily have to discover and create what works for us. In the world of BDSM all we can be more or less sure about is that what we create will orient around some

explicit separation of powers, authority, sensation, restraint, or other issues of control. The specific nature of our own particular talents and desires is what will make our own relationship(s) unique.

What To Do When Scenes Don't Work

Fear of a bad scene is the curly-toed monster that lurks in every Top's heart, and in the hearts of more than a few bottoms, too. Most bad scenes are not as bad as we fear they'll be, or as bad as we fear they are while we're in the midst of them. All the same, a bad scene is never fun; and so in our own best interests, as well as those of our play partners, we do well when we use care and caution to prevent them.

Leaving aside the abuse of alcohol and other drugs, illness, fatigue, and playing even when one is not in the mood, one of the most common reasons a scene goes wrong is that the players begin to play with the sorts of mismatched expectations that can result from incomplete negotiations. For instance, let us suppose two people have agreed that the Top wants a maid and the bottom wants to *be* a maid, so they go off to play. But perhaps the bottom expects to be a prettified French maid, prancing around in 6" heels while waving her feather duster at some dust motes in the air while the Top crops her bum, and the Top expects a scullery maid who'll get down on her naked knees and wash the muddy floor while he's in the other room doing something else. Disappointments such as these two players are bound to experience can usually be avoided simply by making negotiations as detailed as possible, and including in those negotiations some discussion about expectations and goals.

But sometimes, even after the most thorough negotiations between experienced players, a scene can still go wrong. Typically, in that sort of situation, no player is having a good time, they are all engaged in a serious power struggle, and/or the play has ceased to be erotic.

If you find yourself in a scene that seems to be turning, call a safeword. In straight time you can function as equals. Then engage in some constructive communication to resolve whatever seems to be problematic.

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“Constructive communication” does not mean telling the other person how wrong her approach to Topping is, or what a bad bottom he is: it has nothing to do with blame at all. It’s more like another phase of the negotiation, seeking a win-win situation where everyone has a good time through cooperation, rather than a win-lose situation where one person has a good time at another’s expense, and everyone else has a bad time. There are actually a few tried and true rules for this process that assist people who have disagreements to air with each other to do so in a manner that is calm and emotionally safe.

1. Recognize that no two people are alike, and so your expectations and those of your partner will not—*cannot*—be exactly the same.
2. Be willing to speak up when an issue is important to you. If you don’t, your silence can become a breeding ground for resentment, hostility, depression, and upsets of all sorts. By the same token, you don’t have to vent every phase of every minor dispute, and you don’t have to behave like the apocryphal Valley Girl who called her safeword in the midst of a scene because her hair was getting mussed.
3. Take turns speaking and don’t interrupt. When one person has had her say, the other person can have his.
4. Listen carefully to what the other person says so you can repeat the sense of it back; when it’s your turn to speak, make sure you understood what you heard by paraphrasing it to the speaker and then asking, is that what you meant? If the answer is No, seek clarification and try the process again. Only reply when you are certain what it is you’re replying to.
5. Frame your remarks as “I” statements that begin, “I think . . .,” “I feel . . .,” “I need . . .,” and so forth. You can learn to recognize an “I” statement because when you use one you always disclose something about yourself, and you never say anything critical or blaming about anyone else. When using “I” statements, however,

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do beware of criticism or blame that is camouflaged to *sound* like an “I” statement, but actually allows one person to bash the other—statements such as, “I think you’re a selfish, nasty, mean-spirited boor.”

6. Don’t humiliate, ridicule, or insult another person, and don’t analyze him, diagnose him, label him, preach to him, lecture to him, or otherwise belittle him or try to change who he is. Bear in mind that communication is a two-way street: it involves listening as well as talking.

Inner Children and Other Alternate Personas

In SM we often talk about playing “in role,” which means at very least that we occupy a slot as Top or bottom for the duration of a scene. But for some people a role is far more than just a part to play. For them a particular role—servant, slave, pet, drill sergeant, Victorian school mistress—fits like another self. Though occupying the role all the time would interfere with other facets of most people’s lives such as work and other relationships and would be, therefore, severely limiting, it can exert a compelling power nonetheless. Some people may even feel they’ve found a part of their inner home; and in a way perhaps they have.

If you feel drawn this way to some SM role you have occupied, you may have identified what we call an “alternate persona,” and what the British psychologist John Rowan, basing his work on Roberto Assagioli’s pioneering theories of psychosynthesis, calls a “subpersonality.” Since the middle of the 19th century western psychologists have examined the meaning of such variants on people’s basic personalities, at some times considering them to be expressions of psychopathology, at others as normal and even creative expressions of human consciousness.

The naughty schoolboy or nasty nurse that show up in a lot of SM porn and also show up periodically in real SM scenes are not, in themselves, alternate personas. They are roles: caricatures, stereotypes, masks we pull

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on in order to portray parts in our little erotic dramas. But the playfully mischievous or deeply rebellious sense of identity we bring to that naughty schoolboy role, or the delightfully wicked chill with which we feel ourselves enveloped as we lock a bottom into restraints at the start of a cruel medical scene are not qualities we put on like masks; they are qualities that arise from deep within us, telling us about some hidden or not-so-hidden aspects of ourselves.

The alternate personas we are talking about are common among most or maybe even all people, at least in our society. They are so common, in fact, that phrases in our colloquial language attest to them. For example:

- I'm of two minds about this;
- I'm beside myself with anger;
- I don't feel like myself today;
- Why don't you act your age.

We express variant parts of ourselves not only through our language, but through our behavior as well. For instance, we do not bring the same personalities to interactions with our children as we bring to interactions with our parents; we do not bring the same personalities to our spouses as we bring to our pals at work; and we do not bring the same personalities to work as we bring to play—SM or otherwise. It seems we change parts many times every day, and the only time this process becomes problematic is when we are not conscious of it and it gets out of control: when, for example, our mild-mannered, cooperative self leaves home for a rush-hour commute and suddenly turns into a snarling, competitive self and we are not fully aware of the shift.

This is not a book on personality theory, and for the most part there is no special need in your SM life to examine your personas as long as you feel comfortable with the facets of yourself you express in different times and places. But a few types of alternate personas common to many people do show up periodically in SM play, and knowing about them ahead of

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time can help you have an unusually effective scene, or at least avert a total bust.

If you're doing a crossdress scene, for instance, the man or woman in crossgender clothes may actually feel somewhat like a person of the sex she or he is portraying. If so, this might *not* be the time to stick with a plan for erotic humiliation or heavy pain, but rather to learn who the crossgender persona is. That person's needs and wants, as well as what she or he has to offer, may be rather different from those of the person who negotiated the scene, and you might need to renegotiate.

It is particularly important to watch for the inner child because all people regress emotionally when we are tired, ill, or under severe strain. An inner child may appear in scene, then, especially when a bottom is subjected to unusual sorts of stress, including the kinds of stress some scenes are intended to precipitate.

Outside of baby scenes, child personalities don't usually belong in an SM environment. If you find yourself spanking an adult who begins to behave like a tearful child who is *really* unhappy in the scene and the scene ceases to be erotic; or if you are being spanked and begin to feel extraordinarily child-like and fragile: consider using your safeword to stop or at least to pause in the scene to discuss the change you're noticing. It is certainly possible to learn about your alters well enough to invite one out of a scene in which she has no place, and to do so without interrupting the scene. But first it helps to know your parts so you know who's interrupting whom and why, and this learning usually takes some practice.

Maybe, too, over your years of play you'll meet a child alter who loves to be spanked or whipped, but it's far more probable that if you continue to hurt someone who has become, in effect, very young, you will provoke an emotional upset and a difficult or even a bad scene. This can happen even in the most innocent of circumstances.

A number of years ago Sybil took Bill to a party in role as her slave. At one point, knowing that he had difficulty bottoming in public, she told him to go to the changing room, get as naked as he could, and then to return to the dungeon. She figured he might take off his shirt—that was as naked as she thought he could get under the circumstances—but he came back to the play room entirely undressed.

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Delighted and surprised, Sybil put Bill in a sling and started to play with him; but she quickly recognized that he was no longer having a very good time, and he was not communicating with her at all. She worked her usually successful magic to arouse him, but he seemed distant and difficult to reach. Finally she pulled up a chair and gently rocked the sling.

A long time later Bill said, in a quiet, shaking voice, "I want to get down." And once he was down he curled up with Sybil in a corner and wept for hours.

What had happened?

Under the stress of going far beyond his limits, Bill had experienced an unexpected age regression to a pre-verbal stage of infancy. Partly because Sybil knew a great deal about erotic age regression; partly because Bill had a well-developed inner witness; partly because we had both been working with our own child personas; and partly because we were both willing and able to communicate with each other about the upset, we didn't end our SM lives. Instead, we processed the scene for the next six weeks, deepening our relationship and our knowledge of this sometimes spectacular pitfall to a scene. When we talked to other players about our experience we learned that we were nowhere near alone: that with and without people's awareness, kid selves were popping up in enough scenes to warrant some attention. Hence, this section in our book.

Though sometimes younger alters speak in funny voices— nasal, adenoidal, squeaking through adult vocal cords, with immature diction, grammar, and pitch—this voluntary behavior usually doesn't even occur to them unless they and their adult hosts know that they exist and want to make their presence clearly known; frequently they do neither. Unless she's paid attention to this kind of process the person you are playing with may have no inkling that she's even regressed. She may just feel unusually needy and vulnerable, or boisterous and mischievous.

Since you cannot count on explicit communication to tell you if or when you or your grown-up play partner has become something of an emotional child, it would help if you were able to identify implicit cues. But an inner child may be any age or ages; he may be unaware of his existence and tell you he is the adult in whose body he resides; he may be a crossgender child persona.

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Rather than try to spot some specific characteristic, therefore, if you have any reason to believe your play partner has regressed or is regressing, pay attention to deviations from his normal way of behaving, and notice what he *doesn't* do that he usually does as an adult. The person's tone of voice may change, his posture may change, he may start talking about simpler topics in shorter sentences and with a smaller verbal and emotional vocabulary than he usually does; he may want different foods, or be unusually insistent about eating, using the toilet, or some other activity; he may seem fragile and easily upset. What most child personas *don't* do is act like mature adults.

Like intentional age play, unexpected age regression can provoke flashbacks for some people, including the adult authority figure in the scene. Though such memories are unlikely to be dangerous, you can avoid the pitfall in large measure by being honest about your past in your negotiations, and letting your play partners be honest about theirs. If you think the scene you plan may call out a child inside you, talk about the kinds of cues that are most likely to trip you, including sexual, emotional, or physical abuse cues, or other taboo transgressions from your childhood.

If a child alter appears in a scene, move slowly and gently, whether or not you continue to play. You can minimize the possibility of doing harm by being completely consensual with the child, even if this means renegotiating some activities, such as sexual behavior. This sort of emergence is *not* a case of someone being a bad slave. Respect limits carefully, and if something goes wrong go directly to straight time without trying to fix it first. A young alter will sometimes know how to pull himself out of a particularly difficult space, and even if doing so requires breaking role or ending the scene, let it go: you can always have another scene another day. Changing positions, clothes, or names often helps; bathing or showering helps also, especially if the regressed person repeats her adult name over and over to herself at the same time. On the up side, an unexpected regression will probably remind you to include this kind of information in your future play negotiations.

Aftercare

BDSM is an unusually intense form of sexuality, which is exactly what most participants like about it. While no research to date indicates that activities in BDSM relationships are abusive any more often than activities in comparable vanilla relationships, that intensity itself requires some special consideration.

In a BDSM scene someone usually has felt pain, been constrained, or given up his will for a time, and usually someone he cares about or even loves has hurt him, bound him, or given him orders he could not, would not, or did not dare to disobey. In BDSM the whole experience of erotic energy exchange is charged with a deliberate power imbalance that would, were it not negotiated and consensual, enable the abuse it often resembles in the eyes of people who do not understand.

When many scenes are over, the partner who has been done – and sometimes the partner who has done the doing, too – can benefit from some unmitigated kindness and TLC. Immediately after a scene is not the time to remind your partner that she didn't clean up after the dog, or that the rent is due. It is time, instead, for sweet talk, gentle gestures, warm caresses, cuddling, a massage, a cup of tea, a glass of wine if you are so inclined. If you do not feel comfortable with this much intimacy after your scenes you might want to include some discussion of your preferred methods of aftercare in your pre-play negotiation.

Perhaps it should go without saying that after they make love many people want to retain some echo of whatever bliss they achieved, but we know that frequently players forget how much about SM's intensity can translate into this sort of intimacy. While one of the chief functions of good aftercare is to provide comfort and a space of transition to the rest of a person's life, another is to remind play partners – whether they are partnered in other ways or not – of that translation.

For an excellent, more elaborate discussion of aftercare, see Chris M.'s "White Light/Black Leather" at www.subbondage.net/chris_m/ and click on "Aftercare."

SM & Spirituality

When I am being whipped my journey is one of acceptance and release. My process is to receive the input and allow it just to be; not to flinch or resist, for when I do I step off the path of surrender. Deep, slow breathing, in on a count of four, out on a count of eight; conscious relaxation of all my muscles including my forehead, jaw, belly, and anus; a meditation to find my consciousness—which is usually in my head—and move it down through my chakras. When I find myself at a physical limit, sensation has become intensified to a nearly intolerable degree. At that moment I open the back of my throat, lower my voice, visualize a drawbridge that opens downward in the middle, and with slow, deep, deliberate breaths drop my energy, my awareness down through the drawbridge. With each succeeding drop my personality falls away to the side and I find myself closer and closer to being a clear, flexible, hollow tube, a channel for light coursing up through me. This is where I fly and soar, this is where I cry and laugh, this is where I am all Spirit. And this is why I get whipped and am honored to whip. — Sybil

The history of organized religion is filled with tales of devotees who journey inward or outward for their spiritual insights by inducing trances through intense, repetitive movements, as the Whirling Dervishes of the Sufis do, or through lengthy periods of intense physical sensation, as the Christian flagellants did. Apparently both these forms of activity put enough stress on the participants' bodies that after awhile endorphins and other hormones are released into their bloodstreams, bringing about feelings of calm, elation, and rapture resembling the sense of awe many people feel in the presence of creation's infinite mysteries.

All the world's most populous religions include ascetic orders of monks or nuns who take vows of silence, hunger, poverty, chastity, and other deprivations to help them focus their attention and energy on the path they hope will lead them to the gods they worship. The martyrs who wore hair shirts, hung on crosses, knelt on pebbles or walked with them in their shoes, also intentionally increased their pain and suffering as a

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way to intensify their devotion and become more holy than they felt they were.

Numerous cultures prescribe elaborate meditations, vision quests, or other challenging rituals as rites of passage or atonement. Their successful completion is often a prerequisite for admission into adulthood, the priesthood, or a return to society after the commission of a crime or sin, in part because the concentration needed to accomplish a goal of this nature is likely to have provided the initiate with this same sort of spiritual experience. At various times people in many cultures have sought a similar encounter through psychotropic chemicals.

At present our society seems to place more emphasis on the forms of worship than on encounters with the spirit. But there are small gnostic enclaves where people gather specifically to encourage ecstatic spirituality among themselves, some of which are particularly involved with SM-related practices, and there is a rather large group of people who seem familiar with at least the physical features of the religious experience: these are athletes such as marathon runners who find a kind of ecstatic peace by forcing themselves to their second wind, which they sometimes achieve after passing through the place where their bodies desperately want to stop. This place has come to be known as the Wall.

With such a great deal of history associating submission to stressful rigors with visions of non-ordinary reality, it is hardly a surprise that some SM bottoms find that a long, elaborate whipping or spanking can bring them to a similar state, which Dossie Easton calls "the forever place." And since aerobic exercise is one activity that excites the release of endorphins, it is not much more a surprise that some SM Tops achieve a similar result from swinging a whip for a lengthy while.

The players who talk most about the spiritual dimensions of SM seem to be those who are involved in sensory deprivations, such as immobilization bondage with a blindfold or hood; ecstatic whipping, as Sybil described above; or in the psychological exchanges of dominance and submission (DS).

Many a submissive, like many a monk, is focused on the duty of his service; he seeks to serve the good or pleasure of another, specifically his Top. If he is devout his practice *can*—though it may not—bring him the

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remarkable rewards associated with such virtues as patience, generosity, selflessness, and faith. The way this grace seems to be achieved is through seeing the god or goddess in the Top and adoring that spirit through the surely fallible human. This can be a deceptively egalitarian form of worship in which the bottom may, sooner or later, come to see that he or she is equally holy: if the energy of a god or goddess lives in one of us, how can the energy of a god or goddess not live in each of us? Top or bottom, the energy informs all of us: we are all its vessels.

In this configuration the dominant may be more like an Abbot or a Mother Superior than like a monk or nun, since in order to have her own pleasure fulfilled she must focus not merely on herself, but also on the duty of instructing the submissive, as she may by stating her own needs and desires clearly, and seeing that the bottom learns to satisfy them. In this way she can achieve a variation on the same rewards the bottom seeks. When held in a spiritual context, every role and every act concerns itself with service.

For some people a protracted period of sensory deprivation such as may be felt in immobilization bondage constitutes a long meditation: a chance to let go of the mundane, and to simply be with whatever experience the inner self provides, from fear to peace, from rage to joy, from grief to the absolute freedom of the spirit.

Because of the nature of SM, the spirituality players encounter generally points up the proximity of spirit and flesh. In an interview included in Mark Thompson's *Leatherfolk*, Joseph Bean and Fakir Musafar compare the functions of a Top with the functions of a KaSeeKa. Fakir, one of whose many experiences hanging from flesh hooks was captured in the film *Dances Sacred and Profane*, explains that the Mandan Indian term KaSeeKa is applied to a person who has "gone through the ritual of hanging by piercings and is out there with young men, doing it to them, helping. . . I've seen S/M scenes where a person who normally Tops got very humble and very impersonal and started not to Top but to KaSeeKa, and then the quality of the experience changed for both people."

In Bean's essay, "The Spiritual Dimensions of Bondage," also a part of *Leatherfolk*, he illuminates his process as a Top in the same sort of way: he understands his entire life as a spiritual process, engaging "that

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impulse in a man which urges him to discover his nature, overcome his fate, and strive for what destiny offers but does not promise." Spirituality is available to humans, Bean says, but it must be achieved.

To extend into spirituality, a man may go head first as the yogis do, body first as fakirs do, heart first as monks do, or he may attempt the perilous task of going sexuality first as in certain tantric paths. Strangely, the submission required for bondage is not tantric in nature. It belongs to yet another class of spiritual paths which, because they act to bring all energy centers into alignment and move them "up" together, are called "noble" or "balanced" ways. The spirit in the bondage dungeon is moving within all human energy centers at once. It engages mind, heart, and body; focusing them by way of sexuality. . . .

Tantric SM

Periodically, some SM player who regards his practices as spiritual will drop the word *tantra* into his discourse. Usually the person doesn't mean literally that he is a *tantrika*—a devotee of this ancient meditative discipline—but rather that something of the tantric way of life has entered and enlivened his eroticism.

Like taoism, tantra is a spiritual practice based in *doing nothing with awareness*. "Doing nothing" does not mean falling down in a spineless heap, waiting for a million dollars to beat a path to your door, or accepting abuse in any way. It means, rather, using the energy an event is already generating to help it move on in the direction it's already going. People familiar with certain martial arts will recognize in this description a self-defense process in which a person who is being attacked does not try to alter an attacker's course, but uses the attacker's own movement to throw him off balance. Similarly, taoists say they do not seek to fight against a river's course but to surrender instead to the watercourse way: to go with the flow, as the hippies used to say, or ride the tide, but to do so specifically with the kind of keen, ever-vigilant attention that requires

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constant practice.

In this sense tantra, like yoga, is a spirituality for everyday life: work, home, and leisure time all become temples for devotion. Since it is possible and even desirable to bring a tantric perspective to any activity, then, it is obviously possible to bring tantra to any form of sexuality. And by making any sex act a meditation, tantric sex becomes a spiritual practice.

SM and its sister art, DS, are uniquely suited to tantra because, at least ideally, their practitioners explicitly court a state of surrender in order to experience the most profound erotic grace. In tantric terms that state of surrender is a condition of doing nothing.

Since it seems easiest to talk about surrender from the vantage of the person who gives in to an experience directly, in SM it is easiest to talk about surrender from the bottom's point of view. In SM it is the bottom who usually has to process sensation so intense that outsiders and even players often call it *pain*. Yet, much of the art of SM bottoming lies in learning to surrender to sensation itself, *undefining* it as something unpleasant that one should try to escape, and *redefining* it as an escalation of tactile energy entering one's sensorium that one might rather embrace than reject, as one might embrace increasingly intense sounds, colors, tastes, smells, or emotions. When people talk about tantric SM it is often the process of achieving this surrender that they mean; and the process of achieving surrender lies, itself, in the art of submission.

While in SM the bottom submits to sensation administered by the Top, in DS the bottom submits to the dictates—psychological, emotional, physical, sexual—of the Top, who *dominates*. But people generally do not wish, let alone seek, to submit to the demands, orders, and whims of others: to do so flies in the face of both our biological programming and our social training. Born and raised as we are to regard submission as inherently dangerous or at very best demeaning, a DS bottom may also have something intense to process: emotions, such as resistance, fear, anger, sorrow, grief, guilt, or shame. It is to these feelings that the DS bottom submits, as the SM bottom submits to sensation; and if he can do so without simply suppressing his feelings, he can make of his surrender a gift for the Top.

Actually, in SM the bottom does not just submit to sensation; otherwise his surrender could hardly be a gift, SM could not be about relationships

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between and among people, and the erotic potential of any scene would be real but very limited. Instead, when he surrenders to what he feels he can also surrender to the person providing the sensation. Similarly, the DS bottom does not just submit to abstract commands, but to the specific person issuing those commands. Because bottoms who play with energy in these ways charge their behavior with erotic feeling and couch it in negotiated, consensual terms and structures, SM and DS can be deeply intimate erotic experiences. If, in addition, bottoms who play with erotic energy bring a tantric awareness to their play, their SM and DS can be deeply spiritual experiences as well.

We've been addressing tantra from the perspective of bottoms, but Topping can be no less tantric, and no less spiritual. As the art of bottoming lies in learning to surrender, so much of the art of Topping lies in learning to direct another's journey with the same attitude: not by insisting that everything happen according to a specific plan, but by relaxing out of an ego state and into the sensual flow of intensely shared energy. (This is why SM players distinguish between getting whipped and stubbing a toe, and DS players distinguish between serving a Top and doing what the boss demands. Still, some leatherfolk have certainly found it helpful to translate what they've learned in SM and DS when visiting the dentist or dealing with intransigent traffic cops.) For an SM Top to "do nothing" looks very much like doing *something*, because she is clearly the active, rather than the receptive, partner: whipping or spanking or binding the bottom in a typical SM scene, controlling and directing the activities in a typical DS scene. If the bottom is the boat that rides the river's currents, the Top is the helmsman who chooses the preferred channel, determines when to come about, and makes sure the whole craft doesn't run aground. No sailor can succeed at such an enterprise by fighting the elements—or the boat—but only by learning to flow with them.

In the intimate eroticism of SM and DS, all this flow—all this tantra—is based in mutual trust among players. Tilopa, who was a mentor to the great Buddhist sage Naropa, composed a long poem about enlightenment he called *The Song of Mahamudra*. In the poem he urged people to become like hollow bamboo with nothing inside, recognizing that only such an emptiness can become a flute for the divine. People who do not believe his song are fools, he wrote.

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In some parts of India receptive tantra is known as the left-handed path, distinct from yoga, which is the active, right-handed path. Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, who was a tantric master in the path of crazy wisdom long before he came to the United States and very long before he was discredited by an uncomprehending American popular press and the distinctly *non*-tantric behavior of a clutch of his politically motivated lieutenants, interpreted Tilopa's statement:

Why call them fools? He does not call them sinners, he does not call them irreligious, he simply calls them fools—because not believing they are missing the greatest bliss life can give. . . . [which] cannot happen unless you trust. . . . so much that you can surrender completely. . . . All . . . moments of bliss happen only when you surrender.

We could find similar teachings in any esoteric religion, from Sufism to Qabbalism to Wicca to gnostic Christianity. The trappings are not as important as the path, but tantric SM has the special attraction of being easily and intimately erotic by its nature.

According to various sources the word *tantra* means something like *union* in its original Sanskrit. For many people whose interest in SM includes the exchange of energies between Top and bottom, the union refers to a union of self with other, as well as a union within the self. With two people the union can be sexual, emotional, physical, intellectual, spiritual, or any combination; within oneself union is the integration that allows a person to feel whole, peaceful, sensual, serene, and connected to her spiritual source as if she is in the right place at the right time.

For people involved in the spiritual dimensions of erotic power exchange, union may look different in SM than it does in DS, but the purposes and results are similar. In SM the Top encourages the bottom to surrender, not only through the whips and clips and other tools of sensory stimulation, but also by directing the bottom to use techniques of awareness such as slow, deliberate breathing, and to maintain her attention on the presence of energy in her body, noticing where that energy is moving and where it is blocked. She may encourage consciousness of sound, instructing the bottom to raise and lower her voice, opening the back of her throat and

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breathing so that the impetus for vocalization begins in the belly, with the movement of the diaphragm, rather than in the larynx. She may encourage consciousness of movement, teaching the bottom not to flail around jerkily in moments of pain or excitement, so that the energy that has built up in the bottom's body from sensory input is not discharged and diffused in a random or unplanned way, but is directed through the entire relaxed body instead, so that all movement can flow purposefully and smoothly. She may encourage the bottom not to tighten up her muscles, resisting and blocking the flow of energy through her body, but instead to deliberately relax each muscle and open herself to that sensory input.

As with techniques in any other field, these sorts of skills are to be learned so that they may be forgotten, becoming as natural as a baby's breath, until the bottom no longer has to pay attention to what she has learned, and can pay attention, rather, to the world they open up. This evolution is similar to the process of learning to drive: for the first few outings the novice driver has to pay attention to the pressure of his foot on the gas pedal, the tension of the steering wheel, the power of the brakes, signaling, turning, and stopping. But after awhile the basic skills of driving have become second nature and our driver, no longer a novice, can take himself from place to place efficiently while enjoying the process of driving, as well as the delicate ballet danced by dozens of cars on the road. If skills such as these do not become automatic, much of the purpose of the process is defeated, in driving as in erotic energy exchange.

As in SM, so in DS the tantric energy exchange is still about awareness; but while the experience of the process can also be a meditation in this form, focusing on a spiritual union of self and other, the tools are different.

In DS, as in SM, the Top encourages the bottom to be present in her awareness of what she is doing. As part of this process Sybil likes to have her bottoms repeat like a mantra the phrase "It's Her [Sybil's] world," and suggests that whenever a bottom feels unhappy, disconnected from her, or out of sorts with their scene, it can be a sign the bottom has drifted away from that mantra.

For the most part we who live in the industrialized late 20th and early 21st centuries have never learned the honor and value of service, whether given or received. Instead, we have been taught from early childhood to

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assert ourselves as individuals: to strive, to take charge, to compete, and to win. We have not been taught to balance these aggressive ways of being with their receptive counterparts: to give, to let go, to surrender, and to merge. One of the non-sexual, non-play values of erotic energy exchange is that it can teach exactly this sort of balance.

The experience of union for a Top is usually different than the experience of union for a bottom, because rather than giving himself up, the Top becomes responsible for himself and another. In a sense, the Top comes to love the bottom as he loves herself, and takes care of the bottom as he takes care of himself; the bottom becomes precious to the Top, as the Top is precious to himself.

In SM the bottom gives up her physical resistance to intense sensation. Where her physical blocks can dissolve, there her energy can flow; ultimately, she can release her physical, emotional, and erotic energies and give them to the Top, who returns the energy to the bottom joined with the Top's energy, and so on in an ever-unifying cycle.

In DS the bottom's goal is to become an extension of the Top and of the Top's will, giving up as far as possible his sense of self and his separateness as an individual human being. He seeks to trust completely that his Top will take care of him and his needs, so that he can serve the Top unreservedly.

Many bottoms report that when they learn to contain the build-up of their erotic energy during a long and/or intense scene, they can later release that energy in what has come to be known as an SM orgasm. The SM orgasm seems to be the same experience Wilhelm Reich called a full-body orgasm. It involves not just the genitals and related systems, but starts with some powerful release beginning near the base of the spine and rises up to the neck and head, reaching down to the legs and feet as well, until everything from top to toe seems to shake, rattle, and roll.

Descriptions of SM or full-body orgasms also resemble descriptions of the *kundalini* rising in kundalini yoga. According to these disciplines kundalini, also called snake energy, is thought to be the life-force energy that lies curled like a sleeping serpent at the base of every individual's spine; when the force is awakened the kundalini rise up through the energy points along the spine known as *chakras* (pronounced: SHOCK - rahs),

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releasing the energy from these points in explosive waves that may rock the body and snap the head back and forth. Even men who are not supposed to be capable of multiple orgasms seem able to repeat this form of release over and over again; genital orgasm, including ejaculation, may follow if the bottom and his Top agree, but people often say that, enjoyable as it is, genital orgasm is relatively limited, and its pleasure pales by comparison with this release.

SM Safety

Top's Golden Rule:

Do not unto another what's not been done to you.

Why is Safety Such a Big Issue?

Like everything else in life SM can entail risks, some of which can be identified and avoided before they become problems simply by employing the common sense Voltaire observed is not so common. For example, don't play under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. If you're planning to be sexual with a partner, get and give the information that will allow you both to make responsible decisions about disease protection and birth control. As a Top, don't try to spank someone who has not agreed to be spanked: people of all erotic persuasions generally do not take kindly to being handled without their explicit permission. As a bottom, don't get inescapably tied up in some stranger's drawing room: there are very few Jeffrey Dahmers trawling for subjects, but it only takes one to ruin a perfectly nice evening.

Other risks that are more SM-specific but less self-evident can also be identified and avoided before they become problems, by acquiring a bit of technical expertise. If you're Topping, then knowing how to tie a reliable knot, or how to handle a whip, can help you to achieve your desired effects and enable you to have more satisfying scenes. If you're bottoming, having the same level of skill you'd expect from a good Top will help you to know if the Top you're watching or starting to play with knows enough about what he's doing for you to let him do it to you.

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As we wrote in our "Disclaimers and Acknowledgments," there are now many really fine books from which you can learn pretty much anything about SM that can be taught in a book; some of the best that were in print as of this writing are all listed in our Bibliography, beginning on page 232.

Some SM activities cannot be taught or learned through writing and reading alone. Among them are the sorts of activities best learned through demonstration classes, where you can see and possibly even try out a technique so that you really grasp the nature of the experience. You can gain a general understanding of still other activities by reading or watching demos, but you can only learn to perform them safely through one-on-one instruction from an experienced player who can oversee and guide your practice.

In all these cases it is at least as important to know what *not* to do as it is to know what *to* do. A well-administered spanking can make a whole scene fly, while a poorly-administered one can end a scene before it properly begins. A well-executed fisting can be a joyous, deeply intimate experience, while a poorly-executed one can be painful, dangerous, and even fatal. The sections of this book devoted to the techniques of SM Safety are intended to maximize the pleasure you give and take in all your SM activities, and to minimize the risks you take with your own and your partners' pleasure, health, safety, and life. It is not our intention to scare you off, but rather to help you play with a maximum of information.

Body Play

Sensation

Pressure

Squeezing (hand)

A good way to ascertain someone's tolerance for physical intensity is to squeeze, with one or both hands, the breasts, nipples, labia, testicles, or penis, because these are especially sensitive, as well as erotic, parts of the body. Start squeezing *gently*, and increase pressure *slowly* while monitoring the person's responses to learn her or his limits, how quickly those limits are reached, and how the person manifests them.

Women with breast implants should never have the bodies of their breasts played with more than lightly, although pressure on the nipples is usually not problematic. When in doubt, ask the woman; if you *are* the woman and have doubts, ask your sexually informed health care provider. Women who have had breast cysts should consider avoiding breast play involving heavy pressure or striking. A man's penis can be squeezed **harder** when it is soft than when it is hard because the more rigid it is, the more its tissues are susceptible to rupture. Also, the penis is one of the first organs to feel manifest vascularity reflecting changes in diabetes. If you damage the vascular tissue in a diabetic, the tissue may not heal well and can cause complications leading to physical impotency. Testicles generally can be squeezed by hand as hard as the man will permit, but again: start slowly and increase pressure gradually. Never yank or twist the testicles quickly or you risk damaging them as well as the spermatic cords, vas deferens, and other internal structures of the reproductive system.

Straps

Though a few people are allergic to leather or rubber, for most people straps made of either material can be used to wrap the breasts, penis, or

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testicles to create pressure, although genital bondage that interferes with circulation should be undone and redone every 10 - 20 minutes. (For more information about breast and genital bondage see page 202). Leather is the more forgiving material, since it isn't elastic and doesn't continue to increase pressure on the wrapped body part once it is secured, as a length of stretched rubber does. It also breathes, so heat does not build up under it as much as it can with rubber.

Narrow strips of either material (1/4" or less) are more likely to cut the skin than wider strips (1" or more), but no matter what material you use it is important to monitor the portion of the body isolated from the heart before, during, and after wrapping it. Check for tingling, changes in skin color, or any other sign of coldness or numbness, since any prolonged or tight constriction can interfere with blood circulation. When a person has any kind of bleeding disorder, such as sickle cell anemia or hemophilia, or a disease such as diabetes, or any other vascular disorder, that person's blood flow should never be restricted anywhere.

The kind of narrowly focused constriction produced by straps can produce a subcutaneous hematoma—a blood blister that resembles a dark purple bubble—if it ruptures small blood vessels under the skin. Such a bruise appears most frequently on the penis or scrotum; it is not dangerous, but it disappears slowly and can be difficult to explain to the uninitiated and curious.

Clips & Clamps

From simple clothespins to nipple clamps made expressly for SM play, most devices that pinch the skin are safe for use anywhere they can grip enough loose skin to hold onto except on or around the eyes. The less skin the clip holds, or the narrower the clamping surface, the more painful the clip's bite usually is. When the tips of clothespins have been cut or sanded off so that the pincers end in a flat surface, they can take a firmer grip than otherwise. Saw-toothed instruments, such as alligator clamps, press deeper than flat clamps and may cut tissue; some hemostats (medical clamps) crush tissue and are not appropriate for SM play; clamps left on the mouth can cause bruising on the lips because of the rich blood supply there.

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The length of time clips can be left on varies greatly, depending on the nature of the clamp, the body part to which it is attached, and the tolerance of the person to whom it's attached. Also, body weight resting on clamped skin increases pain and may reduce a person's time tolerance for being clamped.

Some degree of numbness ordinarily sets in after skin has been moderately clamped for about five minutes, as blood flow slows; pain, of course, decreases at the same time. Playing with the attached clamps brings sensation back to the affected area. Blood flow resumes when the clips are removed, causing a rush of very intense sensation; removing the clips quickly enhances this rush of sensation, removing them gradually mutes it. Rubbing freshly unclamped skin greatly increases the pain that results. In general, about ten minutes constitutes a good trial for most beginners with a mid-range clip, but some people will tolerate that level of intensity for more than an hour or even an entire night. For this reason, each individual should be monitored to determine her personal response.

Clamps of all sorts are tricky toys, since they often look less painful than they feel, and once attached they never stop hurting entirely, even if the Top ignores them. To get a feel for the intensity of any clip or clamp, test it on the web of skin between your forefinger and thumb or on back of your hand, which is more sensitive, or on your lip, ear, nipple, labia, penis, or scrotum.

Teeth & Nails

When he was a novice, one Top we know was asked to finish off a bottom who had already been spanked, paddled, cropped, caned, and whipped, and who was swimming blissfully in a sea of her own endorphins. The Top spent nearly half an hour making tooth tracks on her buttocks, pubis, and inner thighs, bringing the swooning bottom to new depths of ecstasy.

One proof that SM need not be an expensive hobby is that most Tops always travel with sharp tools capable of exerting considerable pressure on delicate erotic tissue. Fingernails are especially useful for stimulating nipples and genitals, while teeth can also be worked by the jaw muscles to subdue and even bruise the large muscles of the thighs and buttocks.

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Although they cannot simply be left in place while the Top does other things, teeth and fingernails, like other clamping devices, are generally safe for use anywhere they can grip enough loose skin to hold onto, except around the eyes. But because even a freshly-washed mouth is laden with bacteria, and even freshly-scrubbed nails are liable to have small pockets of dirt or soap clinging to them, it is critical that they neither break a person's skin nor come into direct contact with open sores, cuts, or other lesions. Ideally, nails—attached to fingers as they are—should be covered with gloves or cots before they enter another person's body; and teeth—attached to mouths as *they* are—should not expose themselves to other people's orifices without barrier protection.

Obviously, people do not follow these rigid sorts of precautions all the time. Even in the most vanilla sex, scratches and hickeys are common. If you have reason to believe you may be entering a situation where fang and/or claw might touch skin and/or flesh, clean yourself and/or your partner as well as possible and wash after exposure with anti-bacterial soap containing triclosan.

Vices

Devices made for small-area compression can be used on the breasts or genitals for erotic effect. Most such vices are made of wood or metal with wing nuts for tightening; some, designed specifically for SM play, are lined with rubber padding and/or sheepskin to reduce potential damage to the skin and underlying tissues. As with other means of building a sensation of pressure, vices should be tightened slowly to effect a feeling of aching rather than one of crushing. While vices can be safely used to compress breasts, labia, and testicles -up to a point- they should not be used tightly on penises, whose tubes can be damaged by the pressure.

Weights

Weights of all kinds can be hung from clips attached to nipples or genitals, but how *much* weight any individual can tolerate or enjoy, and how *long* she or he can sustain the weight, are highly personal matters. As usual, proceed from ignorance: start with something light and add to

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the total gradually so you can monitor changes in sensation and response. Seek to effect a feeling of aching rather than one of yanking. If you're hanging weights from the testicles, a band 1" wide or more, wrapped around the neck of the scrotum tightly enough to keep the testicles away from the body, can protect the spermatic cords from shock to some extent. Even so, don't jerk on the weights, or drop or pull on them suddenly: doing so has the potential to damage internal structures.

Tissue damage may be noted by swelling, bruising, or unpleasant pain, sometimes immediately, sometimes in a day. Most such damage is as inconsequential as the bruises and scrapes kids get every day falling off their roller blades or sliding into second base, and can be relieved by the judicious application of ice or chemical ice wrapped in a thin towel to prevent ice-burn or frostbite. But if you suspect a serious injury seek appropriate medical attention, especially if the injury endures for a day or two. Finally, be careful handling and placing weights so that if they fall—accidents do happen—they don't cause injury or damage. Be aware, if you use uncovered lead weights (e.g., weights for fishing lines), that extensive, direct contact with lead is toxic.

As a rule of thumb you can check for injuries with the acronym SHARP: **S**welling, **H**eat, **A**ltered function, **R**edness, **P**ain.

Friction

Abrasion

The safe yet stimulating sensation of abrasion can be provided through the use of nearly any item with teeth or rough surfaces: emery boards and sandpaper, which are cheap and disposable; hair brushes, tooth brushes, and other brushes of all kinds; metal nail files, cheese and nutmeg graters, chain mail butchers' gloves, rubber-studded construction gloves, toothpicks, and, again, the item you are never without: fingernails, which should be especially clean if you're going to break the skin.

With abrasion, a light touch is usually better than a heavy one, and will help you to avoid leaving grit in the affected area. Abrasion instruments may sometimes break the skin, so if they are not disposable (like emery boards) or totally cleanable (like metal nail files), each toy should only be

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used on one person. Even so, in the interests of health and safety, always clean body fluids from all toys (for particulars see “Safer Sex, Clean Toys, HIV/AIDS and Other STDs,” page 221). And bear in mind that abraded skin will be more sensitive to, and less able to withstand, other intense sensations, such as those produced by mentholatums (page 169).

Shaving

Shaving removes not only hair, but a few layers of dead skin cells as well. As a consequence, the nerve endings in recently shaved areas are closer to the surface of the body than usual, and more susceptible to sensation than usual. Particularly when the shaved areas are erogenous zones, this increased receptivity can provide ground for sexual stimulation; a power dynamic can be implied when one person removes another's hair, as Delilah showed when she cut Samson's hair, and as jailers and the military often demonstrate by cropping or shaving the hair of prisoners and new recruits.

To avoid exposing anyone to another person's body fluids, never shave two people with the same razor blade. The simplest way to follow this tenet is to use disposable razors or safety razors with disposable blades. Difficulties and risks may arise using straight razors, both because they are difficult to decontaminate adequately, and because it is easy to produce a dangerously deep cut with a straight razor.

If you feel compelled to use a straight razor for some reason—for example, since it can look very menacing you might want to wield one to inspire fear—look in some of the beauty supply houses in your area for one of the straight razors that take disposable blades; then you can throw the blade away after it's been used. Straight razors can be tricky to use by people unfamiliar with their weight and balance, and by the extreme sharpness of the blade, if it is honed enough to shave rather than scrape. Before shaving anyone with a straight razor, practice shaving gel or cream off a well-inflated balloon. When you can shave the entire balloon without breaking it, you're ready to try using a straight razor on yourself, and then on someone else. If you do use a straight razor on another person, make sure that she remains absolutely still while you work: even a small movement under a sharp razor can result in a large cut.

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Before shaving—whatever razor you plan to use—trim the hair as close as possible with scissors or clippers. Soak whatever hair remains at the skin line either by immersing the body part directly in warm water or by covering it for a few minutes with a warm, wet towel. Clean the skin with antibacterial soap and water, and wipe it down with 70% isopropyl alcohol to decrease the possibility of infection. Use shaving cream or gel or some other preparation that will reduce razor drag. Some people find that they scrape skin less the second or third time they use a safety blade than the first time. To reduce the possibility that a rash will erupt, which is often a sign of minor infections in nicks in the skin, clean the skin again with antibacterial soap or any agent containing triclosan after shaving; clean the area three or four times a day for the next three days with a mild antiseptic, and clean the area and treat it daily thereafter with the same mild antiseptic—or aloe vera gel, vitamin E, or other healing potions—if you keep the area shaved.

Temperature

Mentholatums

Tiger Balm, Vicks Vapo-rub®, Mineral Ice™, Ben-Gay®, mentholated cough drops, and other products containing menthol can command a person's attention to a surprising degree when they are used on sensitive parts of his body. Small amounts go a long way, however, and large amounts can cause genuine agony that may end your scene. Extra-strength versions of these products may be excessive for SM play with some people, so before using them ascertain that the regular strength remedies are inadequate to your needs.*

* Capsaisin cream can also command attention, although it is not a mentholatum. Capsaisin is the active ingredient in chili peppers, and though it is manufactured in strengths up to 0.075%, a strength of 0.025% already feels like a live flame and is plenty hot for almost anyone. If you are unfamiliar with capsaisin cream, you must use it on yourself before you even think of applying it to someone else's skin: it is nearly BDSM malpractice to do otherwise.

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The sensations generated vary greatly in intensity from one of these products to another, and people respond differently to different products as well. For instance, some people break out in a rash where Ben-Gay® is applied; other people have allergic reactions to other products or to menthol itself. Mentholatums will feel extremely, painfully hot on skin that has recently been shaved or otherwise abraded, and may also feel too painfully hot on a large area of skin. Therefore, start with a small amount of ointment or cream on a small area of skin, about ¼" square—½ the size of a woman's short pinky nail. Experiment with care and caution until you find the right substance, applied in the right amount, to achieve your desired end with the relevant individual. Use a clean Q-tip® style swab each time you dip and apply the substance, to avoid contaminating your jar of mentholatum.

Mentholatums are difficult to remove entirely once they've been applied to the skin, but they can be washed off with cold running water and lots of soap, dish detergent, or shampoo. Large amounts of witch hazel can also wash them off, and plain yogurt can cool the hot spots down.

Before using any mentholatum in a scene, test it by applying a small dab to the inside of the subject's elbow; allow 15 minutes—some people advise an hour or even overnight—to discern the extent to which a single application has had its effect, and to determine possible allergic responses. Whatever level of intensity you achieve should last as much as half an hour, but monitor the spot for an hour or so. If the mentholated person is in bondage you don't want to undo in a hurry, keep a wash cloth handy in a dish filled with soap and water—just in case.

Introducing mentholatums into the vagina or rectum is a controversial practice. Some authorities believe it is ill-advised, because mentholatums upset the natural biological balance of these mucosal tissues; some people who have done so for years report no problems. In any case, mentholatums feel "hotter" on these and other mucous membranes than they do on outer skin. Mentholated cough drops can provide a uniquely stimulating experience in oral sex, but if you use cough drops in this fashion, monitor the recipient for unwanted reactions.

Oil-based mentholatums may be diluted with lubricant, but, like oil-based lubricants themselves, or any other oil-based products, they will

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damage latex very quickly, rendering it useless as barrier protection.

The odors of all mentholatums linger in the air and on the body.

Other Spicy/Minty Products

Toothpastes and mint oils can be used in the same ways mentholatums are used, and, like mentholatums, they vary in strength from one to another. Proceed slowly and cautiously, therefore, when using them for stimulation on sensitive body parts. Proceed slowly and cautiously as well when using Tabasco® sauce and other pepper derivatives, which may be applied to body parts for the sensation alone, or may be applied to one person's body and then licked off by another person for a completely different purpose. People who like spicy, tingly, or minty sensations may find any of these products a titillating adjunct to oral sex or masturbation.

Candle Wax

The sensation of warm or hot candle wax dripping or spilling onto exposed skin can be intensely stimulating or gently soothing, depending on the temperature of the wax when it meets the skin, and on the sensitivity of the skin itself. The skin of the nipples is more sensitive than the skin on the back or lower legs, for instance, and skin that has been sensitized by slapping, spanking, or other sorts of flagellation, or by shaving, pinching, or abrasion, is more sensitive than skin that has not been specially addressed. The skin of the inner labia, the tip of the penis, and the clitoris are usually too sensitive for hot wax.

Candles that are generally safe for use because their melting points are low are white "plumbers" or "household" candles and votive candles, all sold in most hardware and drug stores. "Madonna" or "7-Day" candles also burn at a low enough melting point that those colored candles are safe to use. Beeswax and small birthday candles burn with a higher melting point and consequently cause more pain. Some of these candles burn with so high a melting point that their melted wax can burn past the surface layers of skin. Even in experienced hands these candles are likely to cause blisters or more severe trauma, and they are never safe to use in SM play.

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If you're not sure about some specific candle, test one drop of wax on the inside of the Top's forearm from a distance of about 9". This practice will give the person in charge of the scene a clear idea of the instrument's potency.

Unsafe candles include scented candles, candles that are covered or trimmed with metallic paint, candles that contain large proportions of water, and candles that contain any plastic at all, like some long, thin, "specialty" candles. Dripless candles contain chemicals that irritate nearly everyone's skin. Many colored candles burn hotter than white household candles, and their dyes irritate some people's skin. If you want to use a colored candle test *one* drop on the bottom's inner forearm and check for redness or irritation.

Melting point is not the only determinant of heat when melted wax falls on skin. Proximity is also important because the closer to the target, the hotter the drop will be. On the other hand, the farther the burning candle is held from that target, the more uncertain accurate aim will be. In addition, melted wax may pool on or under the person on whom it is poured. If the wax is hot enough, that pool may cause more of a burn than the dripped wax does, particularly if it collects on skin that has been abraded, depilated, or otherwise sensitized beforehand.

Before using any candle, check to see if there is a small piece of metal attached to its underside. In normal use the purpose of this plate is to restrain the wick when the candle burns low, but in SM use you should remove the metal plate to ensure that it does not fall off and burn someone.

Because, surprisingly, every candle is unique, the Top ought to test each one before using it by dripping a bit of wax on his own inner forearm to gain a sense of its temperature at different distances. An ice cube trailed after a drop of molten wax cools the burn and reduces the possibility of tissue damage; it also creates a delicious contrast of sensations.

Be especially cautious whenever you use candles on or near the genitals, particularly the clitoris and the head of the penis. Avoid getting wax in the navel, or on fresh piercings, cuts, or open sores, because bits of wax may remain behind and become irritants or even cause infections. Baby oil can help to dissolve wax trapped in body hair, but it's usually better to

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avoid this problem in the first place. As a general safety precaution, never use candle wax on anyone's head, face, neck, or ears. As another, always keep lit candles, matches, and lighters away from anything flammable, including alcohol, amyl or butyl nitrate solutions ("poppers"), hair spray, and body gels with or without glitter.

To avoid a messy wax residue on the person being waxed, spread a thin coat of baby oil on her skin before waxing: the heat will be just as intense as it would be without the oil, but the cooled wax will come free of the skin more easily. Alternatively, wrap the area to be waxed in ordinary kitchen plastic wrap or its industrial-strength cousin. Both conduct heat and cold very well, and wax will adhere to neither.

To avoid a messy wax residue on the bed or floor, place a plastic sheet under the person being waxed; much of the dripped wax can be removed with a whisk broom and dust pan after it dries. Vacuum as little dried wax as possible, since too much wax will clog most vacuum cleaners.

If you don't have a plastic sheet handy when you want to do your waxing scene, use a tarp, sheet, towel, or other cloth under the person being waxed instead. Use only a cloth that you're willing to throw away or consign to use as a "waxing sheet," because it will never again be waxless. Most washing machines cannot handle wax, so if you keep the cloth you may have to wash it by hand. If you do use a machine, pick the wax off as best you can by hand, then wash the waxing sheet by itself; otherwise, melting wax may migrate to other items in the wash load.

Even if you're very careful, it is possible to burn or be burned by candle wax, as it is by the candle flame. First-degree burns, like most sunburns and scaldings from steam in the kitchen, turn red; they are painful, but can usually be treated at home and will heal quickly. Second-degree burns blister, may ooze, and are quite painful. They may also be treated at home if the burned area is no larger than about an inch in diameter.

Third-degree burns are extremely dangerous, even—or especially—if nerve endings have been damaged so severely that the burn victim feels no pain. Skin is charred white or creamy, and may be dry and warm. These burns constitute a medical emergency and should receive *immediate* medical attention.

With all burns the first intervention is to stop the burning process. Body cells continue to burn even after the heat source is removed, so flood the

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burned area with cold water for 10-30 minutes or until the burning stops. Do not use ice or ice water, since such extreme cold can also kill skin cells. Once the burning has subsided, cover the burn with a clean, dry cloth such as a sterile gauze pad. Do not use such traditional folk remedies as butter, Vaseline® or other petroleum jelly, vinegar, potato scrapings, or honey: food and oil can hold heat in and make the burn worse; they can also cause infection.

After covering the burn leave it alone for 24 hours: burns generally respond best when they are allowed to develop a healing process on their own. After 24 hours remove the covering and gently wash the burned area with soap and water or a mild providone-iodine solution; some people who find these solutions too harsh prefer to use hydrogen peroxide. Repeat the washings once a day before applying topical medication, and keep the burn dry, clean, and covered between washings.

Many topical ointments and gels are available over the counter to help heal burns, prevent them from becoming infected, and soothe their pain. In selecting this sort of salve look for one that lists polymyxin B sulfate or bacitracin as an active ingredient. Aloe vera, either taken directly from the plant or used in a commercial preparation, has an analgesic action. Apply aloe to the burn four-six times daily, beginning two or three days after the burn occurs. People with a history of heart problems, or who are using any kind of blood-thinning medicine, should not use aloe.

Preparation H®, more commonly used as an anti-hemorrhoidal salve or suppository, contains a yeast derivative that speeds healing. Once a burn has started to heal vitamin E, dribbled as an oil from the gel capsules in which it is usually packaged, will soothe the burn and may reduce or prevent scarring. Do not use Vitamin E *before* the burn starts to heal or you may encourage infection in an environment sealed off from air by the vitamin oil. Whole milk, the only food substance that should ever be applied to a burn, has a high fat content that can feel soothing and promote healing *after* the burn has cooled and the healing process has begun. The burn can be soaked in milk for 15 minutes at a time, or it can be covered for a like period with a milk-soaked washcloth as a compress. Both the cloth and skin should be rinsed thoroughly after application, or the milk will sour.

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If a burn blisters, leave the blister intact. If the blister pops, do *not* pull the loose skin from the top of the blister. With clean hands, gently force the liquid out through the hole, clean the area with soap and water, dry it with a clean towel, apply a small amount of antibiotic cream, and cover the blister with a sterile dressing. If the fluid is clear, continue to treat the burn as before; if it is cloudy, brownish, or greenish, the blister is showing signs of infection and should be treated by an appropriate health-care professional. The burn should also be seen by a doctor if it becomes hot again, turns red, or fails to heal within two weeks. When the burn scabs, do not pick at the scab or remove it until it falls off of its own accord; otherwise you renew the risk of infection.

If the burn seems serious enough to take to a doctor at the outset, *do not* apply any antiseptic, cream, gel, ointment, or spray. Simply clean the burn, apply a sterile dressing, and see the doctor immediately.

Hot Air Blowers, Hair Dryers

Hot air blowers and hair dryers aimed directly at the breasts or genitals can cause an intense burning sensation without doing any damage. The sensation can turn into a mild burn, however, if the blowing is overdone, especially on skin that has been abraded or sensitized with menthol. Hot air may be blown *on* the genitals, but not *into* the vagina or rectum: the internal mucosal skin is too delicate for the air's dry intensity. Even more important, air forced into the rectum can cause abdominal cramping, while air blown into the vagina by pumps or other mechanical devices can push, tear, and otherwise damage internal organs.

Outside the body, hot air will tighten plastic wrap that has been used to encase part or all of a person's body (see Mummification, page 202), providing additional constriction. Hot air can also dry out lubricants.

Ice

The corollary to heat is cold, and ice provides an intense sensation all by itself or following any other skin sensitization treatment. Since ice does melt, keep a towel handy to mop up water, and be careful not to slip

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on unseen puddles. Start the ice melting before applying it to someone's skin so it won't stick to skin; melt any protrusions or sharp edges away before inserting ice into the rectum or vagina; and never leave ice in one place long enough for the skin to become numb, lest you cause frostbite or frostnip, the least severe form of frostbite.

Recall, as we said when discussing *Weights* (page 167), that as a rule of thumb you can check for injuries with the acronym SHARP: **S**welling, **H**eat, **A**ltered function, **R**edness, **P**ain. Frostbite is an injury, and apart from numbness frostbitten skin will display some of those symptoms: skin will turn red or whitish and feel numb and harder to the touch as the tissues freeze. In the event that skin does become frostbitten, do not rub the area, which only causes further trauma. Instead, immerse the skin in warm—not hot—water (102°-111°F). Avoid the intense, dry heat of a stove or space heater, which can burn the frostbitten skin while the frostbitten nerve endings cannot signal that they are being burned.

Soft Touch

Tickling

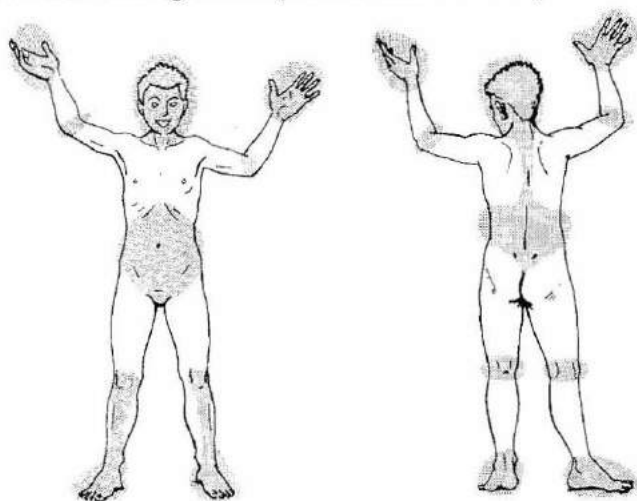
Tickling, that most innocent of childhood distractions, can offer delightful comic relief when a scene has gotten too heavy for the participants' liking; some people find it sensuous. But tickling is not always as harmless as it seems. When it is overdone it can provoke choking, abdominal cramping, involuntary urination, and asthma attacks in those who are susceptible. Tickling may also evoke intense emotional reactions in some people.

Feathers & Fur

Feathers and fur can provide a sweet and dramatic counterpoint to more aggressive stimulation of the skin, and can be used to end a scene on a soft note. Before using these sorts of organic implements, however, make sure no one in the scene will have an allergic, moral, or political reaction to them.

Flagellation

The word "flagellation" derives from a Latin root meaning "little whip." Any form of flagellation, then, is a form of whipping or, more generally, of striking. No matter what form of flagellation you engage in, and with whatever instruments, some parts of the human body are too vulnerable to be hit without inviting injury. Never, for instance, strike the head, eyes, ears, nose, throat, neck, spine, coccyx (tailbone), the kidney area in the lower back above the pelvis, or the belly between the rib cage and the pelvic bone where the relatively unprotected internal organs can easily be ruptured. (There are some very specific exceptions to these warnings, which we will discuss shortly.) And never strike any bones, or any joints, including tendons and ligaments (see illustration below).



Do not strike on shaded areas.

Though bastinado has great cachet in some old spy thrillers, strike the soles of the feet only with great care, since many of the delicate bones there may easily be broken. In addition, hematomas or other swellings on the soles of the feet can press on nerves there causing considerable non-erotic pain.

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In flagellation the term “whiplash” has an oddly appropriate place. When struck abruptly some people who are lying on their stomachs reflexively rear up and snap their heads and necks backwards. This action can cause severe trauma to the neck, just as it can if you are riding in a car that is rear-ended. If you are a bottom who is subject to this involuntary movement you can help yourself resist the whiplash impulse by lacing your hands behind your neck to hold your head steady when you are struck. If you’re a Top playing with a bottom who is subject to it, and you have not tied his head down, you can either direct him to hold his neck in a similar way, or you can hold his head down with one hand while you whip, spank, paddle, crop, or cane with the other. If he is tied down, place something like a rolled towel across the back of his neck to remind him to keep his head still.

Some people may bruise when struck even if they are not hit hard, and anyone whose blood has been thinned by ingesting aspirin, ibuprofen, or alcohol, as well as Vitamin E, fish oil, and some other dietary supplements, will bruise more readily than otherwise; anyone with a clotting disorder, and anyone taking any anti-coagulant medication, will bruise more readily than other people.

The tendency to bruise varies widely from person to person, as does the time it takes for bruises to heal. If your scene will entail any form of flagellation or intensely focused constriction, therefore, be sure to negotiate whether bruises or other marks on the body are acceptable. Bruising can be decreased by applying ice to the affected area, because cold constricts the blood vessels so that the amount of blood entering the tissues is reduced; pain and inflammation are reduced as a consequence, which makes bruising less likely.

Apply ice to an injury indirectly, wrapped in a towel, to avoid frostbite on the affected skin. Do not leave ice in place more than about 15 minutes. Then allow the skin to warm naturally for about 10 minutes before reapplying the towel-wrapped ice. Repeat the process four or five times the first day. After 24 hours switch to heat in order to dilate the blood vessels and improve circulation, using a heating pad or a warm, wet washcloth.

Both muscle and fat cells may rupture, and well-fatted tissues tend to bruise easily. Repeated blows in the same place increase the likelihood of

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bruising. Heavy blows from paddling, belting, whipping, or caning—as well as from football, rugby, hockey, and any other impact—can cause bleeding in muscle or fat below the body's surface where it will not be immediately apparent. Such bleeding results in deep bruises that may not show up for a day or two, but once they appear they may last for days or even weeks. Taking a hot bath or shower may bring marks to the body's surface even several days after impact. In general, bruises are signs of minor physical trauma and are not cause for concern. Never strike areas where bruises are still visible, however, because repetitive injury does have the potential to cause lasting physical damage. Flagellation can also provoke the release of endorphins, and may lead to endorphin shock (see page 208).

The Bare Hand

Slapping

Slapping is the one flagellation activity in which you can strike the face, but you must exercise care to prevent emotional as well as physical harm, and clear negotiation is important, even to the extent of renegotiating just before slapping. Apart from various dangers to the body, which are discussed below, some people find having their faces slapped to be an unpleasantly humiliating experience, whether it is taken as a grave insult or it triggers painful memories from the past.

If you are going to slap someone's face, be sure the person is not wearing eyeglasses or dental bridges, which can break, or contact lenses, which can be jarred loose. Be careful with people who are very near-sighted. Their retinas are longer, thus thinner, than average, and it is possible to detach them with a relatively minor blow to the head. Remove all rings and bracelets, since they can cut flesh and bruise bone. Don't slap anyone who has temporo-mandibular joint dysfunction (TMJ), since a blow to the face can exacerbate the condition, and stay away from the temples and all sense organs including the ears, whose drums can be broken by a cupping blow.

Do not hit with the back of your hand, since the knuckles and other bony protuberances make backhand hits considerably more severe than forehand hits. In addition, backhand blows are dangerous to the person

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doing the hitting, whose fingers can easily be broken in this way.

Instead, hold the face of the person to be slapped under the jaw with your non-slapping hand to support the head and prevent impact injury to the neck and jaw, or place that hand against the person's far cheek to steady the head. Aim carefully, start close in rather than with a roundhouse motion, and strike with your fingers rather than with the palm of your hand in order to maintain the greatest possible control over your own movement. As usual in administering sensation, start slowly, lightly, and gently, and build your intensity gradually. Pay especially close attention, because with face slapping you are likely to reach the limits of a bottom's physical or emotional endurance quite quickly.

If you plan to be involved with face slapping, the person to be slapped should learn to receive the slap without moving, or the slapper's aim may be affected.

Spanking

Spanking, a subset of slapping, is the process of striking the body with a bare or a gloved hand. Although spanking is usually associated with blows to the buttocks, other meaty or fatty parts of the body, such as the upper thighs and the muscles over the upper back above the shoulder blades, may be successfully spanked as well. Pause between spanks to let the person being spanked absorb each impact; as usual, start slowly and proceed gradually.

Many people find it stimulating to be spanked on what is called the "sweet spot"—the bottom inner quadrant of both ass cheeks—because the nerve endings here and at the very tops of the inner thighs just below the cheeks are connected with nerve endings in the genitals. Most people do *not* like to be spanked on the upper outer quadrant of the buttocks near the hips where the nerves are not connected with the genital nerves and where the bone is close to the body's surface.

Genitals, too, can be spanked—but delicately. The clitoris and tip of the penis are very sensitive and liable to bruise, though some women find it erotic to have the mons and outer labia spanked. If you're uncertain, start slowly and see what develops. The testicles are also generally quite

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sensitive, but often can be gently spanked with a couple of fingers by moving the fingers without moving the whole hand.

Although the shaft of the penis can be spanked when it is flaccid, the spongy tissue of the erect penis is susceptible to damage when struck hard: proceed with caution, and do not spank the penis of a man who has diabetes since, as we said earlier, his vascular problems may lead to damage. As with penile bondage, sharp slaps to the shaft of the penis can result in subcutaneous hematomas on any man, which look like dark purple bubbles under the skin and which may appear almost instantly. These bruises are not usually dangerous, but they can last a week or more.

You can spank the skin very lightly anywhere except the eyes, ears, and nose, to bring blood to the skin's surface, but don't spank hard enough to jolt the neck, spine, coccyx (tailbone), kidneys, any bony areas or joints, or the unprotected front of the body, including the abdomen and belly. If you're going to strike any of these areas, aim for the skin surface rather than the flesh beneath. As a rule of thumb, if you're spanking these areas hard enough to tear a piece of newspaper you're probably hitting too hard.

Some Tops wear leather gloves or weight lifting gloves to spank fatty or meaty parts of the body, to protect their own palms from stinging and bruising. The protection comes with two prices, however: the bottom's skin also misses some sting, and the Top cannot feel the intensity of his blows enough to register feedback as well as he can with a bare hand.

Paddling

Paddling is the process of striking the body with a flat, rigid object made of leather, wood, horn, plastic, etc. Paddling is usually done on the buttocks, but, as with spanking, other parts of the body can be paddled as well, as long as they are well muscled or fatted. In paddling with an object, however, unlike spanking, the flagellant cannot feel with his or her own nerve endings how intensely a blow is delivered, so it is even more important than usual to proceed with caution.

Wooden paddles cause bruises easily, and may sometimes crack, presenting splinters that can prick, cut, or gouge unless the paddle is

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thoroughly repaired. Whatever materials they are made of, paddles with holes in them or with studs on them will leave marks very quickly, and those with holes may leave blisters as well. Paddles with sharp or squared edges or corners, or those with rough spots on their striking surfaces, may also cause unintended bruising or cutting. Rulers can leave small, square bruises where their ends strike skin.

Whipping

Striking the body with a whip is one of the classic images and acts of consensual SM. But whipping is actually an art of some subtlety, whose many effects are accomplished with a wide variety of instruments ranging from bundles of delicate strips of soft cloth or doeskin to the long, heavy, single braided tail of a bullwhip. (See note on Whips in Glossary, p. xxx)

The most common whips for SM play are made of many tails (from eight or ten to as many as 50) and are called "cats." They range from very lightweight, delicate pieces whose impact is a form of caress, to heavy, thick whips called "floggers."

Some whips, generally light in weight and soft in texture with unusually short tails, are made specifically for whipping breasts and genitals. Since these toys need to be cleaned especially thoroughly, they are best made of material that is easily cleaned such as rubber or smooth leather, but not of suede. For reasons of hygiene and health, suede whips used on one person's genitals should not be used on anyone else. Women should be careful when having their breasts whipped because breast whipping can sometimes aggravate cysts. Nursing women, as well as women with breast implants or any diagnosed breast problem should, of course, avoid all but the lightest breast impact under any circumstances.

Single-tail whips, such as bullwhips, signal whips, and snakes, can be very dangerous to the person wielding the whip, as well as to the person being whipped; they should not be used until the whip handler has been trained and supervised by someone already well versed in their use.

Because each whip is unique, and because whip tails are flexible, whips are generally harder to aim than hands, paddles, crops, or canes. For these reasons, whipping is a skill that requires a bit of dedicated practice before it's unleashed on another person.

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When a whip is improperly aimed the tips of its tails can overshoot the target area of the body being whipped. Centripetal force then carries the tails not only farther but also faster than the whipper intended, and they “wrap” around the body, striking where they were not meant to go. For example, the buttocks make an ideal place to whip because they are fleshy and well padded. But when a whip is over-aimed at the buttocks its wrapping tails will strike the soft skin over the hip bones or on the abdomen, causing unintended, possibly damaging, pain.

For accuracy, aim with the tips of the tails. That way, while you may strike the body with the tips, the length of the lashes, or both, you will know where the extreme end of your target is.

In general:

- you can strike harder with a soft or light whip than with a stiff or heavy one;
- the lighter the whip the more its impact falls on the surface of the skin (“sting”); the heavier the whip the more its impact falls on the tissue below the skin (“thud”);
- a whip’s greatest force is at the tips of its tails;
- the narrower the whip’s tail(s) the more it stings;
- the fewer tails a whip has the more it stings;
- if two whips’ weights are equal, then the greater the number of tails, the less intense a whip’s impact, because the tails disperse the force of the swing;
- long whips are more difficult to aim than short whips.

Cropping

A crop—like a riding crop—is a stick with a leather flap on one end. It is the flap, not the stick or the hard bulge where the stick is attached to the flap, that is used to aim at and strike upon the body, so while the stick and handle may be of some interest to collectors and aficionados, the flap is what concerns us: a narrow flap produces a sharper stinging sensation than a wide flap; a soft flap stings less than a hard flap. Riding crops were developed for use on large animals, not on people; even a soft-flapped crop delivers more impact than an inexperienced person might expect; crops cause bruises relatively easily.

Before using a crop on a human subject, draw a pair of buttocks on a dark pillow case with white chalk, and practice striking the pillow to perfect your aim. Remember where the *coccyx* and the *sweet spot* are so you avoid the first and can hit the second when you want to.

Caning

Caning is the use of a flexible rod of rattan, bamboo, plastic, Teflon®, etc., to strike the body. Because caning often produces a more intense sensation than a novice might anticipate, and because it can leave more pronounced marks on a body, it is an activity that should be approached with caution by those not yet initiated into its exercise.

Since the blow of a cane falls most heavily at its tip, the tip should always be rounded off so its sharp edge will not cut on impact. Canes that are cracked, split, or broken should not be used because the exposed edges will be sharp and jagged enough to cut the skin in a ragged way. Because a cane is very light and very flexible, and its striking surface is very thin, cane strokes can be extremely painful and very often leave marks ranging from a burnished glow to a bright raised welt. For all these reasons it is especially important to space cane strokes, allowing the recipient adequate recovery time between them.

Canes are relatively easy to aim, especially if they are straight. Holding the cane anywhere along its length from its handle end to its middle, place your index finger along the body of the cane and point where you wish the

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cane to land. Take a few practice strokes for placement, and keep your wrist and arm steady when you strike so the cane does not wander.

Strong cane strokes should never be applied anywhere but the buttocks and upper thighs; the upper back may be lightly caned *if and only if* it is heavily muscled, and if the caner's aim is good enough to stay away from the head, neck, shoulder blades, and all bones and joints. Medium cane strokes can be applied to a man's pectoral muscles. The backs of the calves can be caned lightly if the canee has no history of unexplained calf pain, although they may feel the pain intensely and even cramp. Light cane strokes may also be applied to some women's breasts, but *all* breast caveats apply here! Caning is one of the most painful forms of flagellation, and one of the most likely to break the skin. A cane stroke can draw blood, especially if it is applied over an existing welt. The practice procedure for crops is good for canes as well.

Belting

The range of belts extends from a soft chenille bathrobe sash to a thick strap of heavily oiled leather. Whatever belt you use, never aim with the buckle or let the buckle become involved in the stroke. Since long lengths of belt are difficult to aim and control, double any belt over in your hand, or wrap the excess material around your fingers, leaving a short tongue for striking; be careful not to let the belt wrap. Belting may have negative childhood connotations for some people and therefore be emotionally charged, so negotiate carefully before using a belt in SM play.

Bondage & Restriction

Bondage is the process of binding a person either for purposes of restriction, sensation, or, sometimes, visual aesthetics. For safety's sake you should always be able to insert one finger snugly between the wrist or ankle and whatever you've put around it, two fingers between the neck and a bondage collar. Do not fasten cuffs too loosely, especially at the wrists, because they can slip when the bottom pulls; if cuffs press against the wrist or the brachial nerves at the base of the thumbs they can cause nerve damage.

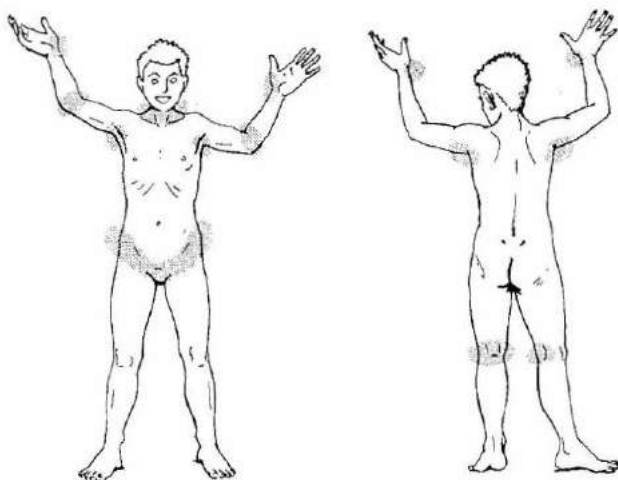
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The neck is the passageway for all the life support systems the brain requires, such as blood and air, and for all the nerves by which the brain communicates back and forth with the rest of the body. To minimize risk to this delicate and important structure, never use ropes around the neck, never pull on the back of a collar, and never attach the back of a collar to any stationary object, lest the wearer fall or jerk his head forward.

In case of emergency such as fire, earthquake, muscle spasm, or emotional upheaval, it is critical that all bondage include some quick release mechanism. Just as you should keep ambulance or safety shears close at hand if you might need to cut through rope or leather, so you should keep a pair of bolt cutters and/or a hacksaw with several fresh, hard blades nearby if you plan to do metal bondage with handcuffs, chains, and/or locks. We always hope for no emergencies, but emergencies by their very nature are not predictable.

You should also use one or more *panic snaps* at the central point in standing bondage, as well as using one as a connecting link at some point in chain bondage—far from the bottom's fingers, of course. Panic snaps are clips which can be released easily and fast, even when a great deal of weight is hanging from them or a great deal of tension is placed upon them; they are available for moderate cost—a couple of dollars each—at good hunting, boating, mountain climbing, livestock supply, hardware, and SM/leather supply stores.

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Use caution when applying bondage in shaded areas.

In any form of restraint, bondage, or suspension, it is important to protect the nerves where they run close to the body's surface. Avoid extreme or prolonged pressure on the inside of the wrists, especially along the area from the side of the arm to the center of the palm just below the thumb; check wrist restraints every ten minutes or so, and ankle restraints periodically, to make sure fingers, thumbs, and feet can wiggle and are not becoming numb, cool, or discolored. In the event of any such change, remove the bindings and carefully rub the affected area to restimulate it, then reset the restraint more carefully.

Avoid extreme or prolonged pressure on the wrists directly under the thumb joints; under the armpits; on the insides of the elbows; at the groin; around the tops of the thighs at the groin; and at the backs of the knees. Be careful, especially with rope, not to pinch the skin, and be particularly cautious about pinching nerves, which can go numb and which regenerate very slowly if they regenerate at all. When someone is removed from bondage her body may feel unusual to her; support her to prevent her from falling. Even in bondage a bottom remains responsible for communicating problems his Top cannot perceive, including unintended pain, coolness

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or numbness in his extremities, dizziness, vertigo, nausea, or unusual fatigue.

Materials

Rope & Other Ties

For bondage purposes, woven or braided cotton or nylon rope 5/8" diameter is considered basic. Rope 1/4" diameter is often used for harnesses, but should only be used for bondage by taking four or more consecutive turns to create a cuff around a wrist or ankle with no skin showing between the turns. Nylon mountain climbing webbing in widths from 1"-3" is sturdy and can also be used for bondage. Otherwise, do not use any rope thinner than 3/8" diameter because it can cut into the bound person's skin, especially if she strains against it. Rope more than 1/2" diameter is cumbersome, and knots made with it will not generally stay tight. Plastic clothesline should not be used on people, since it has a wire core that can cut deeply into flesh.

When using rope do not use knots that will tighten under stress, such as slip knots, or knots that can sometimes slip, such as square knots and granny knots. Use a bowline instead.

While you're pulling on the rope during tying or untying, it can run along the bottom's skin and cause rope burns. If you keep a hand or finger under the moving rope to shield against this danger you'll feel the potential before any problem arises. Pay attention to rope ends also, so that while you're pulling a rope through a loop or knot it doesn't smack you or your bottom. You can learn a great deal about bondage from a book on knot-craft such as John Cassidy's *The Klutz Book of Knots* or a Boy Scout or Girl Scout manual, as well as from Mentor's explicit instruction pamphlet, *The Tightest Hug: Bondage 101*, listed in our Bibliography.

There is some debate about this issue, but scarves, stockings, pantyhose, and neckties made of silk, acetate, or other thin, slippery material are often inappropriate for bondage. Knots made in them may tighten when pulled, cutting off circulation and becoming impossible to untie, and the way these materials fold into themselves when they're pulled may sometimes make

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them so narrow that they can cut skin or cut off circulation. Thick scarves don't share these problems but knots made in them can be awkward and may come undone. Leather laces and cords that are quite narrow can also cut skin and interfere with circulation, and should be used with caution. In addition, wet leather shrinks when it dries, so leather laces can tighten dangerously on a sweating bottom, and knots in wet leather cord can jam severely when they dry. If you have any questions about a bondage material you plan to use, try it out on your own arm first, when you are not under any kind of pressure to perform, and when cutting yourself free if necessary will present no difficulty.

When using rope or any other kind of flexible material for bondage, always have a snub-nosed safety, medical, EMT, or paramedic scissors close at hand so you can cut your subject free fast in an emergency. No equipment is more important than a person, and it's always better to lose some material than to endanger someone's safety.

Irons: Chains, Fetters, Locks, & Handcuffs

Chains

Chains used for bondage should be made of welded links and be of a middle strength, since very light chain may not be strong enough for this purpose, while very heavy chain is unnecessary. The decorative metal or plastic chain usually used to hang plants or lamps is not sufficiently strong to contain a person safely, and is dangerously inappropriate to use for bondage. The rough ends on twisted link chain can tear skin and flesh, as well as damage clothing.

Make sure the links on any chain you use are large enough to accept whatever locks, snap links, carabiners, or safety links you plan to attach. Double links, also known as snap links, are links with snap attachments at either end; they should not be used any place there will be twisting, torque, or extreme tension since the snaps themselves are often made of flimsy pot metal and may break under pressure. As with any other bondage material, if you use chain to suspend a person by her extremities you seriously risk bruising the wrist bones and damaging the nerves. Never lie someone with

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his spine supine on chain, since the links can harm the vertebrae. If left on too long, heavy chain can bruise collar, wrist, and ankle bones.

Fetters

Fetters are iron restraints designed specifically to hold wrists, ankles, and necks. Used primarily in interrogation or prison sorts of scenes, they are typically not padded, so the pressure exerted by struggles or by pulling against them can bruise a person's flesh, bone, and nerve endings as well as abrade his skin. But custom fetters can be made to fit a specific person quite well.

Locks

A lock makes a poor connecting link, especially where suspension is concerned, because unless it's an extraordinarily heavy-duty lock it will be more prone to break than a safety link or a panic snap. Key-operated locks are better for bondage purposes than combination locks because it's easier to get locks keyed alike than to get a series of locks with identical combinations. If you have a series of keyed-alike locks any one of your many keys will be able to open any and all of your locks at any time, and you can store your keys in several easily accessible places so you are never without access to a key. Most hardware stores or SM supply houses can order a box of keyed-alike locks for you.

Accidents, losses, and absent-mindedness do occur, particularly under the stress of an emergency. Therefore, if you do not have locks keyed alike it's especially important to have extra keys for each of your locks, since you do not automatically have a set of duplicates. You can link a key to a lock by color-coding both with spots of identically-colored paint, but in this case do not paint any two locks and keys with the same color.

In any case, make sure you have an extra key for *any* lock you plan to use, and check to see that you know where the key is *every time* before you close the lock. To this end, store your locks in the locked position with each key on a cord which is locked into the loop, so that you have to open each lock with its own key before you can use it.

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A lock's mechanism can jam when it gets old or rusty, and render it unopenable except with bolt cutters or a hacksaw.

Handcuffs

Handcuffs are quick to deploy and dramatic in effect. Their drama may disturb some people, however, so negotiate carefully before introducing handcuffs into a scene. Handcuffs are also sharp and unyielding: they can abrade the skin and seriously bruise the bones, tendons, and nerve endings of the wrists if yanked on, or if the cuffed person's body weight rests on his hands. Therefore avoid, for example, lying a person on his back if his hands are cuffed behind him, and never use handcuffs for even partial suspension, or for hands-above-the-head bondage that lasts more than a minute or two. In any case, handcuffs are ill-advised for people suffering from carpal tunnel-type problems.

If you're going to use them at all, do not skimp on handcuffs: don't buy cheap novelty cuffs whose locks will freeze up and jam. For reasons that remain mysterious to all God's creatures, so far most cheap versions come with a three-link chain between the cuffs, bent closed instead of welded, and most good ones come with a two-link welded chain between the cuffs.

But eyes open, friends. Two links or three, be sure the chain is welded shut. Only the best handcuffs, such as Peerless or Smith & Wesson, are made with a safety catch that's designed to be pushed down with the end of the handcuff key so that the cuffs cannot tighten inadvertently and damage the cuffed person's wrists. Do not buy or use handcuffs whose safety catch is a lever that can be pushed to "off" accidentally, allowing the cuffs to tighten without your knowledge. Even the best handcuffs may someday freeze and be unlockable, of course, but they'll still give you safer use over a longer life than the cheap kinds.

Handcuffs have built-in locks—or, in effect, *are* locks—so all precautions that pertain to locks and keys pertain to handcuffs too.

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Leather Cuffs, Belts, & Restraints

Leather cuffs are much less stressful to wear than handcuffs, and more comfortable to wear for long periods of time. Padded leather cuffs are even better. They are also easier to secure and more readily attached to other people or objects. Still, they must be used thoughtfully to derive the greatest benefit while arousing the least risk. The same caveats concerning pressure points pertain to leather restraints as pertain to all other bondage devices, including the advice against their use by people with carpal tunnel sorts of problems, and the same rule pertains about quality that pertains to handcuffs: don't buy cheaply-made leather restraints. Poor quality restraints can chafe the wearer; D-rings, buckles, and other attachments may pull off if the restrained person struggles, and she may stumble and possibly fall as a consequence.

Cuffs need to be fastened tightly enough so that they will not slip when the bound person pulls on them, especially around the wrists. While cuffs should not be so tight that they threaten to cut off a bottom's circulation, they should also not be so loose that they can slip, which creates pressure on the nerves at the base of the thumbs. As we've said, you should be able to insert one and only one finger snugly between a cuff and the limb it holds.

Spreader Bars

A spreader bar is a wooden dowel or a metal bar with attachment points at its ends and sometimes along its length. The points are used to attach wrist or ankle cuffs in order to keep a bottom's legs or arms far apart. A spreader bar may be attached to nothing else but the bottom, or it may be attached to the floor, to a piece of bondage furniture, or to a suspension device.

In any case, a spreader bar should not be used in such a way that the bottom's legs are forced so far apart that she has to strain to maintain her position; otherwise she may sustain some injury such as a muscle pull. A person may also be injured if, while lying on her back with legs up and spread, weight is placed on the backs of the thighs and hips as would

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happen during intercourse. In this sort of situation make sure the bottom's legs are not spread too far apart for safety. If the bottom provides the Top with feedback on a frequent basis the first couple of times the players use a bar, both people can learn the optimal distance between the bottom's limbs and the angle at which they are held.

Gags

Though it is usually made of leather, cloth, or rubber, a gag is any device used in or over the mouth to silence or muffle vocal sound, and/or to create a feeling of being controlled in the person who is gagged. Gags seem like simple tools, but they are rich in surprise dangers. For example, a gagged person can no longer use a safeword easily, since his ability to speak has been taken away, so Top and bottom need to devise a nonverbal safe signal. One classic method is to put an object such as a bell or other loud noise-maker in the gagged person's hand that he can drop as a safe signal. Another is to have the person grunt loudly a specified (small) number of times, or make some other readily identifiable nonverbal noise instead of speaking.

Using a gag entails some direct physical dangers as well. If you are going to be gagged, don't eat heavily beforehand, and be especially moderate in your consumption of alcohol and other central nervous system depressants. If you plan to gag someone, make sure that no part of the gag can be bitten off in the wearer's mouth, because if it can be bitten off it can also be swallowed or inhaled accidentally, creating a very hazardous situation. A gag made of loosely woven cloth can unravel, and its thread can also be inhaled.

Don't use gags on people who have colds or any other conditions that interfere with breathing through the nose. Never leave a gagged person unattended, even for a minute. You must be able to remove a gag immediately if the gagged person begins to vomit, and you should remove a gag immediately if the gagged person even indicates she feels nauseous or faint. Never place a piece of cloth in a person's mouth and tape the mouth closed as a gag, because the cloth may be inhaled or block the back of the person's throat and prevent breathing.

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Never use metal gags or bits, because they can chip the gagged person's teeth. Be careful using any gag that locks in place because it will be especially difficult to remove instantly in an emergency. Be willing to cut it off or don't use a gag. Don't use a large gag on a person with temporo-mandibular joint dysfunction (TMJ), or require that person to keep his mouth and jaw open very wide or for very long. Test the person's limits before leaving a gag in his mouth unchecked. Consider removing false teeth or bridges before placing a gag in the mouth so that they can't come loose and be swallowed or inhaled in the event the person bites hard on the gag. When putting a gag on someone never tie anything around his neck, since doing so can jeopardize the person's ability to breathe. Similarly, never pull tightly on a gag from the back of a person's head, which can damage the corners of his mouth. Since gags are exposed to saliva and sometimes to other body fluids, some people place a condom over a gag before using it, or reserve one gag for one person.

Blindfolds

A blindfold can be virtually any eye covering that inhibits a person's sight. Blindfolds that are sold commercially, including sleep masks, are usually made of cloth or very soft leather, with padding of some sort to cushion the eyes; generally they are held in place by an elastic strap or a strap that buckles. Whatever you use as a blindfold should be snug enough to stay in place without being so tight that it puts pressure on the wearer's eyes. Never put a blindfold on a person who is wearing contact lenses.*

Darkness can make some people feel disoriented, so be alert to the possibility that the blindfolded person may feel some anxiety or vertigo. He may start to faint and fall down, or, if already seated or lying down, may experience some fear, or may simply start to drift off to sleep. When leading a blindfolded person be extremely vigilant about obstacles in or near his path, and guide him around them.

* A new form of blindfold, such as the "Mindfold," has a foam rubber cutout that keeps it up off the eyes. "Blind Jockey," based on a jockey's mask, also allows the wearer to keep his eyes open.

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When you remove the blindfold be aware that the wearer's thought and movement may be unpredictable. Balance may be affected, so make sure there is some support to lean against or lie down on, and be prepared to provide that support yourself if necessary. Light may hurt the formerly blindfolded person's eyes, so she should keep her eyes closed at first and open them slowly, and be given time to re-orient herself before the scene proceeds. The Top can also use her hand as an eye cover, and remove it slowly to reveal the bottom's eyes to light.

Hoods

A hood is a relatively complete head covering. Those used in SM play are usually made of leather, latex, or spandex, and often have eye and mouth openings that can be laced, zippered, snapped, or otherwise shut; some have no openings except nose holes for breathing. Caution should be used with all hoods that restrict breathing. A hood should be tight enough to close securely, but people's faces sometimes swell a bit inside hoods; so while a person is wearing a hood check the breathing holes regularly to make sure they have not become obstructed, especially if the person's head is moving around a lot. A hood should not be put on so tightly in the first place that the wearer will bite her cheeks. If a hood closes with a zipper, the hood should be made with a tongue or flap behind the zipper, since the pressure of an unbacked zipper, whether open or closed, can abrade and cut the skin.

The potential for disorientation while wearing a hood is similar to the potential for disorientation while wearing a blindfold, and the difficulty communicating while wearing a hood can be similar to the difficulty communicating while gagged; therefore, all the precautions about gags and blindfolds apply equally to hoods.

In addition, never use a hood to suspend body weight, since the resulting pressure on the neck and spine can be very dangerous. The D-rings sewn or riveted onto some hoods are for purposes of attaching leashes, restraints, and other gear; they are not intended to support the weight of a body, and may snap off if used that way, causing the hooded person to fall.

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Since hoods conceal the face and hide communication cues ordinarily conveyed by the movement of facial muscles, hooded people must be closely monitored. People who feel claustrophobic may be unable to wear hoods at all. Hoods and nasal congestion do not go together very well, even with nasal sprays. And hoods and drugs, including alcohol, simply do *not* mix.

Forms

With pregnant women, or with people subject to migraine headaches or vascular or muscular disorders, use soft materials and keep bondage light. With people who have seizure disorders rigid bondage is certainly out of order, and bondage of any sort may be inappropriate. When binding the feet together pay particular attention to the so-called "ankle bones," the inner malleoli, situated on the insides of the ankles. These sensitive bones can hurt a great deal if tight ankle bondage forces them to press on each other. Avoid the unnecessary stress by using a small piece of cloth or leather as a buffer between the ankles.

Whatever your medium, if bondage is for you, you have several options.

Standing Bondage

To effect standing bondage, a frame or support must exist that is strong enough to hold more than the weight of the person who will be attached to it, lest he slump, fall, or suddenly wrench on his bonds. Frames should be stout and solidly constructed; hooks should be sunk deeply into dense wood or concrete. Plant hangers and coat racks will *not* suffice.

Many people find that standing with their arms extended, tied to something straight up above their heads for any significant length of time, is difficult. A half-hour is about the upper limit for most adults, and may be too much for many, because the position places stress on the shoulder joints that can produce loss of sensation and mobility in the arms. In addition, this position, or standing with arms fully extended to the sides, puts pressure on the insides of the wrists at the base of the thumbs, which

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can cause nerve damage. In standing bondage a person is also at increased risk of fainting and falling, which further endangers the arms and wrists.

Rather than standing in the upright spread-eagle position favored by extreme pornographic drawings, therefore, safety dictates that the person should be positioned with his upper arms held straight out parallel to the ground at shoulder level, his elbows bent, and his forearms held up. That way, in the event of a fall or other unexpected tug on the bondage, his weight will be borne by his muscles, not his joints. In standing bondage he should also keep his knees slightly bent, rather than locked, for the same reason. Locked knees also impede circulation, and can promote fainting. Because lock-knee positions are more comfortable and familiar to many people than bent-knee positions, Tops should check periodically on their bottoms in standing bondage.

Standing bondage may also be effected with a person's hands bound behind her back, behind her neck, in front of her, to her thighs, or elsewhere. But the fantasy that a person can be bound with her elbows touching behind her back is just that: a fantasy. Most people's elbows don't come close to touching. If a bottom's elbows are bound behind her it is important not to force the elbows closer together than they fall naturally, because the force can cause a dislocation or permanent shoulder injury. In this form of standing bondage rope at least $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick should be turned five or six times around the upper arms to create a wide cuff; this will help prevent loss of circulation. No one should lie face-up on elbows that are bound together behind him, since the position risks injury to the elbows, shoulders, and back.

If a person is bound to himself while standing, his feet should be tied last and untied first in order to minimize the risk of his falling. A Top should always remain close to a standing bound bottom in order to catch him if he becomes unsteady on his feet, which is a common problem particularly if the bottom is blindfolded as well as bound. Submissive or not, the bound bottom should be allowed to set the pace for walking or any similar movement. The Top who is moving a bound and/or blindfolded bottom on level ground should not shove or pull him. Instead, simply guide him slowly with a gentle, firm hand while standing slightly behind him and to his side, steering with a grip on his elbow or upper arm. The

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Top needs to be extra careful moving up or down stairs, standing below the bottom facing him, paying close attention to both the bottom's balance and his own.

If an individual has been in standing bondage more than five or ten minutes there is a good chance he will need to be released gently for both physical and psychological reasons. Physically, his blood has not been able to roam the byways of his arteries and veins with the freedom to which it is accustomed. Limbs should be released and let down slowly to allow normal blood flow to resume at the body's own pace. Places where ropes or cuffs have held the body may be sore or compressed, but they should not be rubbed. The body will heal these sorts of minor discomforts on its own.

Psychologically, the person who has been bound may need to be held, comforted, fed, watered, and/or walked. A Top cannot know ahead of time exactly what a bound person will need upon his release, but if the Top assumes the bottom will need *some* sort of undivided, conscientious attention, the Top will probably proceed with appropriate caution.

Bondage Lying Down

Stress on the shoulder joints remains a problem in arms-up or arms-out lying-down bondage, but pressure on the wrists is substantially reduced. A person who is hog-tied—lying on his stomach with his hands tied behind his back, elbows tied more or less as close together as possible without force, and feet tied together then brought up to be tied to the hands—should never be rolled over onto his back or have any of the bondage attached around his neck, images rampant in bondage porn notwithstanding, because he could choke. Back problems may contraindicate hog-tie and other arched-back positions.

When a person's hands are tied behind his back he should never be left with his body weight on his hands or wrists for more than a few minutes, since the pressure of body weight can also damage tissue.

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Auto-Bondage

Some people enjoy the feelings of bondage, but have no one to tie them up or don't want to be under another person's control. It may seem easy to tie yourself up if you've never tried doing it, but the practice is actually quite dangerous since no one is around to release you if you run into difficulty of any sort. If a fire breaks out or an earthquake occurs while you're doing auto-SM, you simply remove the clips from your nipples and dash for safety. But if you have a stroke, or if you've frozen the key to your lock in a large block of ice, or sent it to yourself in the highly precarious mail, you could find yourself somewhere between SOL and DOA.

For this reason we suggest that auto-bondage enthusiasts find a risky quick-release solution that will become acceptable when their lives are on the line. Some people propose leaving an extra set of escape keys in a valuable vase in a high place such as the top of a free-standing bookshelf, or in a large jar filled with oil in the middle of the room. You don't want to break that vase, or spill oil all over Grandma's Persian carpet, so you won't use your escape hatch just to scratch a bit of an itch. But in an emergency, your life will take ready precedence. Other precautions include leaving one hand free for your own release, whether sexual or safety, and tying your hands but leaving your feet free to run if necessary.

Good as they are, these sorts of solutions are not nearly as fast as the quick hands of a second party with an interest in saving your life. If you long for the comfort and security of bondage it may literally be worth your life to search for and meet a play partner who'd like to tie you up.

Mummification

Mummification is bondage effected by encasing a person in plastic wrap or gauze and tape, elastic or linen bandages, wide latex strips, a sleep sack, netting, car wash socks, or a leather, latex, or spandex body bag so that he is tightly restrained and looks like a mummy. There should be no reason to tape the skin itself, but if you use tape, be careful: some people have allergic reactions to tape glue, and when it is removed tape can pull out even tiny, fine hairs and may tear the skin it's stuck to, so go slowly.

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Your mummy is not really dead, so never cover his mouth or nose, make sure his breathing is not restricted, and have him expand his chest while you wrap it up so that he can continue to breathe properly throughout the scene.

Mummification is generally done from the top down starting with the shoulders while the mummy-to-be is standing flush against the surface upon which he will later lie down. After the buttocks have been wrapped, lie the person down to finish the legs, since immobility over a prolonged period of time can lead him to feel dizzy or disoriented, and to stumble or faint.

If you use a non-porous mummification material such as plastic wrap be sure to monitor the temperatures of both the room and the person in bondage. Also monitor for extreme increases in heart rate. If the room is too warm the mummified person will sweat profusely, and since the plastic-wrapped sweat cannot evaporate, he could overheat dangerously. In this event treat the person as if he had heat stroke: cool him off in a bathtub full of tepid water. If the room is too cool the mummified person may feel it in an exaggerated way. In any case, a person becoming mummified is likely to experience mild dehydration, so provide fluid on a frequent basis, either through a sports bottle or a straw to avoid choking.

When your scene is over, simply cut off disposable mummification material with blunt-nosed medical scissors. Disposable or not, release the wrapping slowly in any case. Gradual exposure to cool air will usually feel good to someone who has been encased for awhile, but sudden exposure can feel like a shock.

Sensory Deprivation

When you take away one or more of a person's five principal senses those that remain are generally enhanced. Deprive someone of sight and his hearing tends to improve; deprive him of sight and hearing and his sense of smell is liable to get more acute. Blindfold him, plug his ears, gag him, and put his arms and legs in restrictive bondage, and his sense of touch—his ability to feel with his skin and musculature—will become stronger.

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A person in a state of sensory deprivation is extraordinarily vulnerable; she depends on you for everything. Don't touch or speak to someone deprived of her senses as hard or as loudly as you would if she were not so deprived. Someone emerging from sensory deprivation is also extremely vulnerable. The import of the first thing she sees or hears may seem magnified, and leave her with a lasting impression. From start to finish, someone who allows you to deprive her of her senses gives you an enormous gift of trust. Don't abuse this gift or treat it lightly: choose your words and actions carefully throughout the scene as well as afterwards.

Suspension

Although extreme forms of suspension make for dramatic images in some sorts of erotica, suspension is actually a delicate and sometimes dangerous practice that should be approached with respect. In general, never suspend someone off the ground unless you have the special harnessing and hoisting equipment necessary for that purpose and have been trained in the art by an expert. Never suspend a person by his neck, and never suspend someone by his wrists alone, which are too delicate to hold up a body's weight. You can suspend a person by just his ankles, or by his ankles and wrists together, but the practice can be safe only if you use suspension cuffs or suspension boots designed specifically for this purpose. Inverted suspension is absolutely contraindicated for anyone with circulatory conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or heart problems; breathing problems such as or emphysema; serious eye problems such as glaucoma or severe nearsightedness; severe obesity; or hip, knee, back, or other major skeletal problems. It is also contraindicated—especially with a gag—for anyone prone to nausea or inner-ear problems. Suspension is not remotely a novice activity.

Breast & Genital Bondage

A woman's breasts may be bound at the base with rope, leather, rubber, cloth, elastic bandages, or many other flexible materials for purposes of sensation, decoration, or demonstration of control. Breasts should be

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checked for coldness or numbness after about 15 minutes of bondage. Skin may darken because blood flow is restricted, and the skin may feel cool to the touch, but it is not likely to be in danger if the tissue does not feel very cold or become numb. Breasts should not be bound tightly for longer than about half an hour, and when bound they will immediately be more sensitive to stimulation than usual. Like any body part to which blood flow is restricted, breasts will bruise more easily when bound than otherwise. All the caveats about breast play apply: nursing women, women who have implants, cysts, or any other medical condition involving their breasts should engage in these activities with great caution.

A man's penis and/or testicles can be bound with the same materials for the same reasons as a woman's breasts. Although masking tape is usually safe, most other tape should not be used because the genital skin is extremely fine and tape glue may tear it; tape can also pull out genital hair, which can cause intense bleeding.

Male genital bondage can be easily enhanced by the use of cock rings and their many variants. A basic cock ring is a strap made of leather or rubber, which wraps around the base of the penis and scrotum, and closes with snaps, buckles, locks, or velcro. Cock rings help achieve or maintain erections for some men; for others they are signs of ownership, particularly when placed by or at the instruction of a Top. In this latter capacity cock rings are pieces of bondage equipment.

Some cock rings, made of metal or rubber, are simply O-rings that cannot be opened. To put one on, pull the testicles through the ring first, one at a time, followed by the (usually flaccid) penis. While metal rings encircling only the balls present no problems, a caution accompanies the use of metal rings that will also bind the penis. Metal rings are unyielding; sometimes a man who becomes erect while wearing one may find that the ring becomes so tight it does not allow blood to leave his hard cock even after ejaculation, so his erection cannot detumescere. This often painful condition may require very careful use of bolt cutters, or a trip to the hospital, police or fire station, or locksmith.

For more information about breast and genital bondage see *Body Play/Sensation/Straps* on page 164.

Bondage Emergencies

A person who is going to be bound has a responsibility for monitoring his own body and reporting any relevant information such as sensations of tingling, numbness, cold, nausea, or dizziness. Neglecting to eat before the scene, or over-indulging in alcohol or other drugs, is irresponsible.

Nonetheless, people executing bondage should be aware that any of these sensations or inadvertencies may arise—as well as feelings of arousal, fear, or abrupt surprise—and that they can interfere with a person's breath and blood circulation, leading to giddiness and, possibly, to a loss of consciousness that can occur with or without warning. Any of these events constitutes some degree of emergency, and requires that the person be lain down onto a flat surface (bed, sofa, floor) quickly and safely.

If the person faints, first remove gags, hoods, or any other equipment from his mouth and nose, and tip his head back to make sure his air passages are free: if an unconscious person vomits into an obstructed mouth he can easily inhale the vomit, which could be fatal within a few minutes. Check to see that the person is breathing, and check for a pulse by placing your thumb on his carotid artery under the jawbone alongside the windpipe. If either breath or pulse is absent, release him from suspension or bondage, lie him on his back immediately, begin resuscitation proceedings if you have these skills, and call an ambulance or dial 911 for emergency assistance.

Whether he is breathing and has a pulse or not, remove all other bonds and loosen restrictive clothing while waiting for help to arrive or waiting for him to come around. If he is breathing and has a pulse, elevate his legs and make sure he is warm. Do not give him anything to drink until he can speak, hold the container by himself without spilling its contents, hold his head up without assistance, and drink without choking. If he feels hungry, provide a small amount of food after he is fully awake. Then find out what caused the fainting so you can avoid the problem in the future.

Apart from medical conditions such as epilepsy or diabetes (diabetics' blood-sugar may drop due to intense emotion or activity), fainting most often results from being in intense pain while in standing bondage, from

feeling intense emotions, from sitting up too abruptly, from eating too little, or from drinking insufficient liquid, especially in a hot environment.

If a person has a seizure or goes into convulsions, the same precautions and procedures apply. Years ago people were advised to place a spoon or finger between the teeth of a convulsing person to protect her tongue, but science has since discovered that metal utensils can damage the teeth and that a convulsing person can bite the savior's finger pretty hard. A very thin leather billfold, a leather blindfold, or any other similarly thin piece of leather will do the job, however.

Playing On the Edge: Extreme SM Activities

Many people who do not believe they practice SM still enjoy erotic behaviors that are more different in degree than they are in kind from spanking, bondage, and other activities SM players *do* include. Playful rough-housing, restriction of movement, lighthearted slapping, biting, scratching, and tickling, and similar more or less vigorous expressions of affection and physical intimacy occur among numerous species of higher mammals, including humans.

Some erotic behaviors are more exclusively human than others, of course, and a number of those human behaviors found in the SM world are regarded as extreme, even by the relatively small coterie of advanced players who enjoy them. We mention a few such activities in this manual because it is important to acknowledge that they are practiced, and that for some people they hold considerable erotic power.

As we indicated in our Glossary definitions, we do draw some distinctions among advanced techniques, edge play, and heavy play. Advanced techniques, such as piercing and cutting, require hands-on training from a qualified, experienced teacher. Edge play includes activities that are especially risky, such as breath control, and also activities that may not seem risky at all to an outside observer, but that *feel* risky to the player because they are on the edge of *his* particular limits, which could be anything. Heavy play includes activities that are unusually intense, either

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psychologically or physically or both, such as 24-hour-a-day slavery, or whipping to blood or deep bruising. An extreme SM activity may be any or all of these: it may require special training, it may be risky, and/or it may be heavy. For this reason there has been some debate in the SM communities about what activities belong under each heading. We, of course, offer our own view.

We don't include much safety information about these activities specifically because we believe no one should undertake them without intense personal investigation, and—in the case of advanced, risky, or unusually heavy play—without hands-on training by someone who has already mastered their techniques in a sufficiently responsible manner that detailed safety education accompanies the teaching. If you want to cut, pierce, or brand people, for instance, there is no shame in saying that you don't know how. You can then find a mentor who is able to ensure that when you do play on this erotic edge you know enough about what you're doing so that safe behavior is simply an inherent part of the activity.

Any intense SM play can provoke *endorphins*, which are natural, opiate-like substances released by the brain when the body has been under moderate-to-severe stress for about 45 minutes. The release of endorphins produces a euphoric state most people find quite pleasant. SM play that goes on for a very long time, and/or is very stressful, can lead to *endorphin shock*: a condition that results when too much input over-stimulates a person's system so that the over-stimulated brain releases more endorphins than the individual can handle. A person in endorphin shock may feel cold, breathe shallowly, feel clammy, and/or have glassy eyes. If you see someone beginning to exhibit these signs, stop all unnecessary input at once. Warm the person, and when he can sit up and hold a glass by himself provide water, fruit juice, or an electrolyte replacement solution such as Gatorade™. After passing through an endorphin high, even without experiencing a state of shock, a person will generally feel tired and worn out. If a bottom seems very sleepy after an intense scene, endorphin overload is probably the cause.

Water Sports & Bodily Fluids

Urine

There is a long history of human activity—sexual and otherwise—involving “golden showers” and “recycled water,” which in clinical circles has usually been called *urolagnia*. While some people both in and out of SM find this to be an extreme activity, others find it fairly ordinary. On the whole, it is probably the most common and least extreme form of edge play we address in this book. Some people whose tastes run to “piss play” keep expelled urine on the outside of the body and others do not. As usual in these pages, we are not concerned with judging consensual erotic practices so much as we are with ensuring that people who engage in them know how to do so safely.

Unless you have an infection that involves the bladder, urethra, or vulva, your own urine is probably safe to drink occasionally. Whether it is safe to drink other people’s urine is a controversial question. Studies of possible HIV transmission conducted at Tufts University and the Harvard School of Medicine determined that no “replication quality” HIV survived in urine (*Journal of Infectious Diseases*, December, 1989); as of June, 1996, the Centers for Disease Control says that urine does not contain enough HIV to infect another person: the urine’s acidity fragments the virus, and a fragment of HIV is not deemed capable of infecting. If you have further questions about HIV transmission—in urine or in other ways—call the CDC’s national AIDS hotline at 1-800-342-AIDS.

While HIV may be fragmented in urine, hepatitis and various other infectious organisms may be neither destroyed nor fragmented, and may be passed on to anyone who ingests the urine of an infected individual, just as some portion or residue of alcohol and many other drugs including vitamins and medications can be passed from one person to another in urine. If you plan to include the ingestion of body fluids in your SM play, know your own and your partners’ health thoroughly so that you and your partner(s) are both (or all) informed and can take appropriate precautions.

If you do drink urine, do not floss or brush your teeth for several hours beforehand, since these activities can open up microcuts in the gums

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which constitute open routes to your bloodstream. Drink plenty of water afterwards to flush the excess urea out of your system. A glass of water containing a tablespoon of baking soda will help neutralize the acidity in your stomach, although drinking this quantity of baking soda on a regular basis is not good for your body.

If the urinator drinks a carbonated beverage and lots of water before the scene, the urine's acidity will be relatively neutralized. Brush your teeth and tongue with baking soda after drinking urine to neutralize the urine's acidity in your mouth, which can damage tooth enamel. Urine is not dangerous on unbroken skin, but urine that carries infections can infect micro-cuts that might result from ordinary dry skin or abrasion of any sort, and that are invisible to the naked eye. Frequent exposure to rubbing alcohol will dry the skin in a way that can cause damage, but you can check your own skin for micro-cuts by splashing it occasionally with rubbing alcohol, or with vinegar or lemon juice: any of these acidic liquids will make cuts sting. Avoid getting urine in the eyes.

If you plan to have another person ingest your urine, pay attention to your diet for 6 - 8 hours before play. Avoid consuming B-vitamins in tablet form, avoid eating asparagus, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and cabbage, and avoid drinking coffee. All these substances, as well as some medications, give urine a specially pungent flavor and aroma.

Feces

Hepatitis and other serious diseases can be transmitted through feces, and with some diseases this is even a possible route of self-infection. Ingesting excrement, therefore, whether your own or someone else's, can never be assumed safe. If you do ingest feces follow the same precautions outlined above regarding urine: don't floss or brush your teeth beforehand, drink a lot of water, and brush your mouth and teeth thoroughly with baking soda afterwards. Like urine, feces are not dangerous on unbroken skin, but any body opening, cut, or micro-cut is vulnerable to infection from fecal matter.

Enemas

Occasionally introducing plain, lukewarm tap water from a clean enema bag into the rectum and lower colon should not cause anyone any problems, although if you are particularly sensitive you can avoid most pollutants to which town and country water supplies are now heir by using clean filtered water. Hot water should not be used because it can burn, and cold water may cause abdominal cramps. Cramping is always a signal to stop an enema flow, at least temporarily.

Although two teaspoons of salt per quart of water may minimize cramping, most foreign substances added to enema water will more likely cause cramps, and some have the potential to cause injury. A tablespoon of Castile soap or Ivory liquid, for example, will usually result in cramping. Since the lining of the colon is extremely absorbent, adding even a small amount of drinking alcohol (not isopropyl, rubbing, or other nonpotable alcohols, which are poisonous) to an enema will make the recipient much more drunk much more quickly than he would become from drinking a similar amount, because it moves directly into the bloodstream without being filtered by the liver. A large concentration or quantity of alcohol can burn the tender rectal tissue.

If you *must* use alcohol in an enema for some reason we can't fathom, start with a few drops, and work your way up to ¼ teaspoon. Be sure to stir such a solution well to ensure that the alcohol is diluted throughout the water or, again, it will burn the rectal tissue. Some texts claim you can use as much as 1-½ oz. of spirits to two quarts of water in an enema, but many people cannot tolerate that amount, first because the alcohol acts as a laxative, and second because they reach levels of toxicity with lower levels of alcohol. *Alcohol toxicity is a medical emergency* and should be treated as such.

Although we assume, for the purposes of this book, that if you are practicing SM you are doing so consensually, this is a good place to remind you that safety *entails* informed consent, and a drunk submissive is not capable of giving informed consent: she is not capable of making rational decisions, and may forget or not know when to use her safeword. Also, never add anything to an enema you plan to give another person without that person's clear approval based on knowledge.

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Before administering an enema, lubricate the enema nozzle with water-based lubricant: oil-based lubes get caught in the creases and folds in the rectum, as they do in the vagina, and can be difficult to clean out. They can also damage the rubber used to make some enema nozzles. Always run a short stream of water—about 3"-4"—through the enema tube before inserting the nozzle to make sure no air gets into the rectum, since air can also cause cramping. Sterilize equipment with an autoclave, pressure cooker, or similar equipment before using it with any other person—or simply keep separate enema nozzles for each person. If you use a pressure cooker, maintain pressure for at least 40 minutes.

Especially if you're inexperienced with enemas, be conservative with both the quantity of water you use and the speed with which you use it. For instance, under no circumstances should anyone ever have an enema larger than two quarts. And, the higher the bag of water is hung, the heavier the pressure on the water and the faster it will flow. Cramping is likely to result from fast flows. For this reason, do not hang the enema bag more than 18" above the recipient's hips. Mild diarrhea or gas following an enema may be relieved by eating yogurt or a packet of colonic flora pills, which are available at most drugstores. But if cramping lasts for more than an hour, or if there is any bloody discharge following the enema, go directly to an emergency room for medical attention.

Avoid enemas if you have irritable bowel syndrome, colitis, or any other intestinal problem. Though a battery-operated vibrator *must* be removed immediately, especially if it's turned on, never take an enema to retrieve a toy that has gotten lost in the rectum: the enema may push it farther in and make retrieval harder. If you or your partner cannot reach or remove the toy, lie down and breathe slowly and deeply for a few minutes, and drink a cup of hot liquid to initiate the gastro-colonic reflex. Do *not* bear down: let the body try to expel the toy for you. If these solutions do not work, or if you are experiencing internal pain, go to the hospital. Your embarrassment will not be nearly as debilitating as the complications of leaving the toy inside your body, and nurses, physicians, and hospital orderlies have all seen far more exotic dilemmas.

Piercing

Piercing is the process of penetrating the prepared skin with either a sterile hypodermic needle for temporary piercing and sensation, or with sterile piercing equipment for the permanent placement of body jewelry. "Prepared," for the purposes of piercing and other practices that involve penetrating the skin, means washed with anti-bacterial soap, cleaned with Providone Iodine, and allowed to dry for three minutes. Never use ear jewelry in other parts of the body, since the wires are especially thin and can tear skin if they catch on something or are otherwise jerked. In addition, unless the earring hook is gold or stainless steel, it will probably be inappropriate for piercing: silver tarnishes, cheap metals corrode, and either process can infect a piercing or delay its healing.

Piercing is too sophisticated a technique to be taught by book. Permanent piercing should only be attempted by a trained, experienced piercing professional using sterile, professional tools; temporary piercing should only be done by someone trained in person by a trained, experienced piercer. For guidance in piercing, cutting, and branding activities, see old issues of Jim Ward's out-of-print *Piercing Fans International Quarterly (PFIQ)* or Fakir Musafar's out-of-print *Body Play and Modern Primitives Quarterly*.

Cutting

Cutting is the process of incising the prepared skin with a sterile scalpel or other sterile cutting instrument for such purposes as decoration, sensation, or claiming. Like piercing, cutting is too sophisticated a practice to be taught by book, and should only be attempted by a knowledgeable person trained by an expert, using appropriate, sterile tools.

Branding

Branding is the process of burning a mark on the skin for purposes such as decoration, sensation, or claiming. Like cutting and piercing,

branding is too sophisticated a practice to be taught by book, and should be undertaken only by a knowledgeable person trained by an expert, using appropriate tools.

Electricity

The terms “electricity” and “electroplay” are SM shorthand for activities in which the body is stimulated with any of various electrical devices, some of which use static electricity (violet wand), some stepped-down house current (Relax-a-cizor), and some batteries (TENS unit; made-for-SM control boxes; cattle prods; stun guns).

Electroplay has the potential to be extremely dangerous and even life-threatening; it should only be undertaken by someone who is deeply knowledgeable, has undertaken intense personal research, has been trained by an expert, and is using appropriate devices. It is always contraindicated for people wearing pacemakers. We mention it in this book because we know that people engage in it, and we want to enunciate its dangers as one mode of teaching safety.

CPR training is recommended for anyone who plays in SM, but it is *urgently* recommended for anyone who plays with electricity.

Static electricity such as that which is generated by a violet wand is the only kind generally approved for use with people above the waist, but it should never be used on or near the face and especially it should never be used on or near the eyes. No static electricity device or probe should ever be inserted into any body cavity, and an intense spark should never be applied for a long time to one area, as it might burn the skin. Static electricity should be used with great care around body piercings, since it may heat up metal jewelry with which it comes in contact. Keep static electricity away from all alcohols and their vapors, including perfume, since a spark can cause them to explode and burn.

Although some experienced players use electroplay with one nipple at a time, or with both nipples if they have a separate electrical device for each, no other form of electricity than static electricity is *assumed* safe to use above the waist (e.g., from one nipple to the other) because if electric current passes through the chest it can disturb the electrical rhythms of the

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heart, and may cause cardiac arrest. Community mythology holds that it is safe to use other forms of electricity below the waist, away from the heart. But electricity applied anywhere in or on the body goes everywhere – the human body offers it no natural barriers – so applying it below the waist cannot be assumed safe.

Although cattle prods, stun guns, and magnetos periodically appear in SM pornography, their use in real SM is rare, and unsafe in most people's hands. Cattle prods, meant for use on large animals, produce extremely painful muscle spasms in people. Stun guns, which usually do not have safety switches, are designed to deliver very painful bursts of non-erotic force, although admittedly some people have learned to eroticize this sensation. The lowest setting on a magneto is already very high, and when one is cranked up its range of output cannot be controlled.

It is possible to be burned by electroplay toys. For information on treating first-, second-, and third-degree burns, see the section on "Candle Wax" in this book, on page 171.

Breath Control

Breath control is the general practice of controlling someone's access to air. Like most of the extreme activities we call Edge Play, this one is too sophisticated a practice to be taught in a book. It should not be attempted by anyone who does not have thorough knowledge of the process, and who has not been trained by someone knowledgeable enough to be an expert. With breath control, as with all other activities, there are levels of play. Placing a hand over another person's nose and mouth for a few seconds is rarely going to create a problem. Cutting off air for much longer, or using devices that might result in a person's inhaling carbon dioxide rather than oxygenated air, is a very different matter.

Although it is a source of controversy among some players, we believe that actually *depriving* someone of air is too risky an activity for SM play. No one can know in advance whether or how quickly someone deprived of air may go into cardiac arrest: how quickly, in other words, the person's heart may stop. Cardiac arrest often comes on suddenly, and the chances of resuscitation are quite small.

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Breath control is not blood control: *never* press on the carotid arteries, cutting off blood supply to the brain rather than air to the lungs, because even a few seconds' deprivation of blood *can* cause irreversible brain damage. If you have any interest *at all* in breath play, *do* read Jay Wiseman's essay on the subject online at:

www.members.aol.com/OldRope/breamain.htm.

Intense Emotional & Psychological Play

Emotional SM play, sometimes regarded as dominance and submission (DS), presents different kinds of safety issues than physical SM. In many forms of DS—in most forms of submission, training, and service, for example, as with the enjoyment of fetishes—the need for special attention to safety is just not an issue that arises. In other especially intense forms of DS, however, emotional safety is a real concern.

The limits of physical play are usually easy to identify as they are approached: the body tightens; breath becomes shallow, fast, or ragged; the throat constricts; and the voice goes up. Sometimes physical limits can be expanded, on the basis of a prior negotiation, and in any case play that is reaching or has reached a physical limit is usually easy to curtail or stop. The limits of emotional play are sometimes difficult or even impossible to identify until the moment they are breached because no one knows his own blind spots. Moreover, emotional limits are often more deeply embedded in our minds than physical limits are, so they are less amenable to expansion. The repercussions of breaching an emotional limit can, therefore, last far longer than a simple bruise or weal.

In order to minimize the possibility of upset or more serious emotional trauma, it is generally a good idea to negotiate about your emotional limits before engaging in an SM scene. Although, as we've said, some limits may be expanded or extended during a scene with careful prior negotiation, it is not wise to attempt this sort of negotiation *during* a scene, when the Top may be in a state of heightened arousal that leads her to want more than she has bargained for, and when the bottom may be in a submissive state that leads him to want to please the Top more than usual and therefore to agree with her desires, even beyond the bottom's own wishes or safety.

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As we've written, safewords are terms agreed upon by all participants before a scene begins, which are used as signals to slow the action down, change its direction, or stop it altogether. Safewords should not be *over-used* or otherwise used unnecessarily as a way to avoid the fears and discomforts that are inevitable and even desirable components of some scenes, nor should they be *under-used*, as a way to avoid personal responsibility for one's own health, safety, and well-being. Tops, who usually have primary responsibility for the control of a scene, should occasionally check to make sure their bottoms remember the safewords they've agreed upon; Tops should also remember that even though safewords are nominally instituted as protection for bottoms, Tops as well as bottoms have the right, and sometimes the duty, to use them.

Humiliation

Humiliation is the prototypical emotional limit. What is called humiliation exists on a wide continuum ranging from mild embarrassment, to intense but playful ridicule, to real, extreme degradation. In its mild forms humiliation amounts to little more than teasing and is rarely a problem in a scene, although some people—both Tops and bottoms—are easily offended by it, and anyone who wants to include humiliation in a scene would be wise to negotiate any form of it exceptionally well. Embarrassment, as John Warren writes, “is what happens when you force submissives to do what they would like to do anyway if society and their own inhibitions would let them. Humiliation originates outside and is imposed from outside.”

In its middling forms, including what is generally known as verbal abuse (VA), humiliation is usually designed to emphasize the power disparity that has been established for the purposes and duration of a particular scene (e.g. interrogator with prisoner of war; Drill Instructor with buck private; Queen with slave; strict schoolmistress with recalcitrant pupil; owner with dog, pig, horse, footstool, candelabra, or table).

In its extreme forms, including the relentless use of extremely derisive language, humiliation can be emotionally dangerous, effectively reducing a person's self-worth in a way or to a degree that carries over beyond the

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SM play to provoke feelings of disempowerment over a long period of time.

One sign that a scene is moving into such precarious territory is that embarrassment or humiliation of any sort feels non-erotic and exploitive to any one or more of the people involved. Because of humiliation's emotional charge, a Top should be especially kind to the bottom after a humiliation scene, and the end of any scene involving any degree of humiliation should be especially clearly marked by an explicit return of all parties to equal stature.

It is useful to draw a distinction between the emotional state of humiliation (being degraded, or having one's pride or dignity insulted or taken away) and the state saints talk about, of being without arrogance or *false* pride, which we call humility. Discovering one's true humility can be a fulfilling and even a spiritual experience, accomplished not through degradation or abuse, but through a recognition of how investment in ego matters like self-aggrandizement or being "right" sometimes may prevent a person from achieving even a fleeting acquaintance with intimacy.

Interrogation & Other Resistance Games

Resistance is the umbrella term for consensual games in which the bottom resists and the Top persists. Interrogation is one such game in which the Top portrays a police officer or some similar figure of power, and the bottom portrays a figure subject to the power the Top embodies, such as a prisoner. In an interrogation scene the bottom has information the Top wants, and the Top tortures the bottom to obtain it. The bottom resists, struggles, and defies the Top until the bottom is broken.

From the outside resistance games may *look* nonconsensual, but the participants have agreed to play with pushing their limits. The bottom, for instance, who might look like a victim to a casual observer, can stop the scene at any moment merely by using her safeword or by providing what the Top desires, which is usually, of course, the secret info. And then the Top may or may not accept this information as sufficiently good or accurate for his purposes.

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For a bottom who enjoys this sort of challenge, kidnap fantasies and schoolboy or schoolgirl fantasies in which the victim or student is punished for being rebellious, share with interrogation games the thrill of having limits pushed and even breached. For a Top who enjoys such fantasies these games offer a chance to explore the limits of her willingness to press on and defy the niceties of social convention, even if that means being a bully. For both players resistance games provide the thrill of *seeming* to be nonconsensual. Clearly negotiated and instantly honored safewords are essential to the safety of resistance games, where “Stop,” “Please,” and “No more” will be ignored; they’re *supposed* to be ignored—that’s part of the thrill.

Rape & Castration Fantasies

Some people—men and women both—enjoy fantasies of being raped. Their pleasure in the fantasy does not mean they want to be raped in reality, because in a fantasy a person can be the writer, producer, and director of the action, as well as the actor who participates in it. He can set his own pace, choose his preferred level of intensity, and stop the action at any time.

Some people who enjoy rape fantasies also seek to carry them out: not, again, as real rapes, but rather as extreme erotic theatre enacted for the purpose of catharsis, an opportunity to re-write a script of abuse, or even spiritual encounter. Because of the intense charge involved with most rape fantasies, enacting one, like enacting any other fantasy that involves resistance or an adversarial power dynamic, requires very careful negotiation. Safewords must be established, and more than usual the bottom must be willing to use them and the Top to honor them, because this kind of fantasy is likely to bring people not just to physical limits, which are usually approached gradually and with plenty of warning, but to emotional limits as well, which often become apparent only very abruptly.

If the person enacting the fantasy was ever raped in reality, which the Top *must* know in order to proceed safely, negotiation should include enough information about her history to make her reasons for playing

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out the fantasy clear. Does she want, for example, to re-enact what really happened with a loving partner to make a "new tape"? Does she just want to fight back this time? Does she want to fight back and win?

If the person's script calls for a struggle, whether the scene involves rape, interrogation, or some other fantasy, make sure the area in which the struggle is to take place is clear: loose equipment on the floor, scatter rugs, or quarters cramped with furniture can be hazardous to everyone's safety.

In this kind of scene the bottom is, in a sense, the Top: she has the right and even the duty to herself to decide the details of the scene, to have her co-conspirators follow her script, and to call the scene off at any time. Otherwise she runs the risk of suffering the abuse all over again. Anyone involved in helping someone act out a rape fantasy must be willing to play his part, therefore, and not to forget the negotiation in the heat of the moment. Even if the struggle appears to become very real for some participants, no one can forget that it's a fantasy. This game is meant to be a trip to erotica, not to the hospital.

Like interrogation games, the enactment of a rape fantasy may *look* nonconsensual from the outside, but it is played for the purpose of encountering limits. The nominal bottom must not be a real victim in this version of the experience, whatever the fantasy or its expression may mean to her or to anyone else. Again, she must have the power to rewrite the script at any time, and to exercise that power at her sole discretion.

Castration fantasies are less often acted out, and when they are, actual castration does not occur. These fantasies are remarkably common among both men and women, however, and guided fantasies can move a blindfolded man right along with his. We mention castration fantasies here in part to keep them safe, precisely because they are popular as well as forbidden, and it is unacknowledged fantasies that tend to give people most trouble. If you find yourself enacting a theatrical version of this fantasy, be careful with the knife! One safe approach is described in the next section, on "Knife play."

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Knife Play & Other Terror Games

Some people find it erotic to be in an emotional state of terror, and others find it erotic to incite such a state. When, with agreement, the Top wields a knife and runs its edge across the bottom's skin, he is playing a consensual terror game. Yet, like resistance games, terror games are not always what they might appear to be from the outside.

For instance, sometimes a Top uses two seemingly identical knives in knife play. The first is extremely sharp, a fact that is demonstrated as the Top easily (but carefully) slices off the bottom's clothes while the bottom *does not wiggle*. If the Top believes the bottom *will* move around, he can slip behind the bottom and use scissors. Once the bottom is blindfolded the Top switches to a very dull knife, which he trails on the bottom's skin, perhaps even partially rests against one or another of the bottom's body cavities, or, in the case of castration fantasy scenes, draws along the base of the male bottom's scrotum.

Dull knives that have been chilled in a freezer may seem to be much sharper than they really are. The point of a bamboo shish-kabob skewer can also feel like a knife point to a blindfolded, apprehensive bottom, and while the point is sharp, it will not cut unless it is pressed *very* hard. A creative Top should be able to convince a prepared bottom that a knife is, indeed, being used—and not spill the beans afterwards. Otherwise, the most persuasive argument will only work once and the bottom will doubt the Top next time they play a terror game. But this is always a judgment call: if the Top does not tell the truth the bottom may not trust him anyway.

Obviously, safety is of the utmost importance in this sort of play, as it should be in all terror games. If you have a bent for knife play learn proper knife sharpening, handling, and cleaning techniques from an expert, and don't play these games under any circumstances unless you know your partner—and your knives—*very* well.

Gender Play

Playing with gender and blurring the lines between genders can challenge some people's sense of identity. What may seem like an amusing and harmless fantasy beforehand, of dressing a man in women's clothes or dressing a woman in men's, may turn out to be emotionally and psychologically challenging during the scene, especially if the person to be crossdressed has not taken much inventory of his or her own gender identity issues and feels deeply threatened by the pretense. As usual, more negotiation is likely to lead to less upset; as always, honor safewords even if you don't anticipate that merely putting a dress on a man, or a mustache on a woman, will prompt any uproar.

Age Play

Age regression fantasies, whether young (teenage) or very young (infant, toddler) may bring up memories or somatic experiences of unpleasant or merely unresolved incidents from the past. As with gender play, negotiate carefully, and use and honor safewords even if you don't anticipate the need for such a precaution. See also our discussion of "Inner Children and Other Alternate Personas," on page 146.

Sexual Extremes

For discussions about the use of catheters and sounds, and about vaginal and anal fisting, see the relevant sections below, on page 228.

Sex

Yes or No; Birth Control

One of the features that makes SM a sophisticated form of sex is that, while participants usually find its activities to be highly erotic, those activities may or may not involve the genitals, and at the end of a scene a

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fully satisfied player may or may not have experienced a genital orgasm.

As we mentioned earlier, in our discussion of tantric sex (page 149), seasoned players very often seek an entirely different form of release, similar to what Wilhelm Reich described as a full-body orgasm or what some practitioners of tantra recognize as the arousal or rising of the kundalini, or life force energy, and what is known in the SM world as an SM orgasm: a general feeling of energy or emotional sensation rippling or convulsing through the body which may be set off by intense sensations such as those derived from whipping, or by intense emotions such as those inspired by the deep surrender of one person's erotic will to another's.

Whether to include genital stimulation or penetration of any sort and, if so, in what form, are therefore open questions in SM. For some people some form of genital sex is an essential component of an SM scene, for others it is a limit not to be breached, and for still others the question must be negotiated and answered anew with every new partner or each new encounter.

Whatever position an individual takes, he must be ready, willing, and able to discuss it with his partner(s). That discussion is one component of the parties' negotiation. If genital intercourse is a probable or a possible feature of an SM scene involving a man and a woman, the negotiation should, of course, include a discussion of birth control: who will use what device when and under what circumstances.

Since any failure of birth control devices redounds more heavily on the woman than on the man, it is our feeling that the final decision should rest with her. Other people will have other feelings, of course, and so the real final decision will rest with the couple concerned. The most important point is that the question be addressed and answered to the satisfaction of all participants.

Safer Sex, Clean Toys, AIDS, & Other STDs

Whether or not birth control is an issue, sexual safety and health *are* issues any time a person or thing enters another person's body orifices. Until 1995 the only barriers that really seemed to work were forms of latex: gloves, condoms, cots, and dams. Some people tried to develop a fetish for plastic wrap, but few succeeded.

In 1994 a completely new form of barrier protection became commercially available in the form of the first "female condom," sold under the brand name of Reality®. In 1995 a more usually formed condom became available under the brand name Avanti®. Gloves and other barrier products followed. Unlike the latex (rubber) condoms that have been in general use since the 1930s, and unlike "skins," which are made from sheep intestine and do not reliably block transmission of the AIDS virus, all these items were and are made of polyurethane.

Since polyurethane is about twice as strong as latex, barriers made from it are much thinner than their latex counterparts. Partly for this reason, and partly because polyurethane conducts heat better than rubber, many users of the new condoms reported feeling more sensation than they did with latex condoms. In addition, polyurethane condoms provide a safe alternative for people who show allergic reactions to latex, which may range from mild itching and—rarely—rashes to the same sort of anaphylactic shock some people experience in response to bee stings, which can be fatal.

Early tests indicated that polyurethane condoms were no more liable to slip, or to tear, break, or otherwise be damaged in normal use than latex condoms, and that polyurethane was fully as effective a barrier as latex to the viruses that cause most sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. Moreover, since polyurethane does not disintegrate when it comes into contact with oil, polyurethane condoms can be used with water- or oil-based lubricants—a fact that pleases people who don't like having to "refresh" the moisture of some water-based lubes that dry out and become tacky during use, as well as fisters who find water-based lubes too thin for their needs.

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Unfortunately, the August, 1995 issue of *Consumer Reports* threw some of the Avanti's® value into question. According to *CR*, then-recent research funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) found polyurethane condoms breaking or tearing three to five times more often than latex condoms. As of June, 1996, the Centers for Disease Control takes the same position. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is still letting the manufacturer, Schmidt Laboratories, sell the Avanti®, but asked NICHD and Schmidt for additional tests on the product. Until the results of those tests are reported, the FDA recommends the Avanti's® use only for people who cannot tolerate latex. Reality® female condoms can be used by men or women for anal intercourse in the same sorts of circumstances, in which case the inserting partner should not be using a latex condom too.

Whatever material you prefer, use barriers to avoid contact with blood, vaginal secretions, ejaculate, pre-coital fluid (pre-cum), feces, or other potentially infected body fluids. Use condoms on dildoes, vibrators, and butt plugs, and gloves instead of condoms on vibrators with very large heads. To ensure maximum safety of intimate sex toys, own your own and use any other toy on only one person.

As of this writing it appears that in order to kill HIV you should wash all toys that have come (or might have come) in contact with body fluids using an antibacterial soap containing triclosan, then Betadine; let the toys dry before rinsing them with a 70% isopropyl alcohol solution.

You can also clean toys using plain household bleach. As of September, 1995, the Centers for Disease Control recommend a solution of one part bleach to 10 parts water; street wisdom proposes that solution is not strong enough and suggests one part bleach to five parts water. Some health-care personnel feel that cutting the bleach at all diminishes its effectiveness and that a full-strength bleach solution should be used. The good news is that bleach is cheap and it takes very little to clean even a large collection of dildoes. The bad news is that bleach creates dioxins in the environment. Since information varies, the choice lies with you.

Give the toys a final, thorough rinse with water so that no bleach or other cleansing agent is introduced into the body. Dildoes, first cleaned off with anti-bacterial soap, can be washed in the dishwasher. Using a

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condom, or even several condoms that can be peeled off sequentially as they are used, helps speed up dildo and butt plug clean-up.

In any situation where skin will be broken use pre-sterilized disposable instruments such as scalpels and needles. If possible, sterilize other instruments for 40 minutes in a pressure cooker; if not, at least clean what you do use in a bleach solution, using the same guidelines as above, and rinse them thoroughly afterwards with water. Bleach and iodine may dull the edges of some sharps.

People with HIV infection may have greater skin sensitivity than other people, and may mark or bruise more easily; they may also tire more quickly, or be unable to take as much physical stress as people who are HIV-negative. A person with HIV/AIDS may feel better and more energetic at some times of day than at others, so the time of day at which a scene takes place may be important to him, and he might want some planned recovery time in a comfortable place afterwards.

Alcohol, poppers, and many other recreational drugs are immunosuppressors; in addition, their use can reduce a person's ability to assess risk. Though all adults should be free to make their own decisions when their choices will not harm others, being responsible for oneself entails being informed. Even more than for other people, individuals with HIV/AIDS and other serious ailments should seriously consider their use of such drugs before or during SM play.

Male ejaculate is high in zinc content, and multiple orgasms may deplete the body's zinc enough to warrant or require that a man take zinc supplements. Enemas remove healthful flora from the lower intestine which may be replaced by eating fresh, live-culture yogurt (if you use yogurt as a douche, use plain, unsweetened yogurt without additives), or by colonic flora pills containing lactobacilli. Discuss the possibility of using such supplements, as well as all other health-care matters, with your health-care provider.

HIV/AIDS is not the only contagious condition about which to be concerned when you are sexual with another person. Gonorrhea, syphilis, hepatitis, chlamydia, genital warts, and parasites are only a few of the many sexually transmitted conditions that can be avoided by learning and practicing safer sex methods. Be informed, and play responsibly.

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If you have specific questions about AIDS or AIDS transmission, call your local AIDS help organization, or call the national AIDS hotline at 1-800-628-9240. If you have specific questions about the transmission of other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), call your local city or county health clinic, or the national STD hotline at 1-800-227-8922. If you have questions about sex and sexuality in general, the San Francisco Sex Information hotline is open Monday - Friday from 3:00 pm - 9:00 pm Pacific Standard Time at 1-415-989-7374 (1-415-989-SFSI or 1-877-472-7374). If you know of other sex information services in your area, use them.

Penetration

Fingers, Dildoes, Butt Plugs, & the Like

For maximum health and safety, always put a polyurethane or latex barrier on any hand or toy before inserting it into a rectum or a vagina. The fingers on hands used for insertion should have their nails trimmed short, and both nails and cuticles should be filed smooth to prevent sharp edges or hangnails from tearing latex or the body, especially inside the rectum where tissue is exceptionally delicate, and small scratches can become infected by the person's own excrement.

Avoid using dildoes made with a supporting wire in the middle, because the wire that makes them twist and squirm can poke through the object's outer shell and cause bodily harm. Do not insert any object that is open at the inserting end, such as a soft drink bottle, because it can create a vacuum inside the body cavity, making the object difficult and dangerous to remove. Except for medically constructed dilation devices, items made of glass should never be inserted into the rectum or vagina in any case, since they can break with truly unpleasant consequences. Toys inserted into the anus should have a large flange on their outside end; this will prevent them from slipping entirely into the body. If something does slip into the body, do not try to force it out with an enema. Instead, see the section on enemas in this book beginning on page 209, and follow the instructions in that section's final paragraph, on page 210.

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If you use a vibrating egg for anal insertion, whose wire is attached to a battery-operated remote control box, place an unrolled condom over the egg like a bag, and leave the end of the condom trailing out of the anus. Since it is otherwise very difficult to clean the place where the wire attaches to the egg, this practice will allow you to keep the egg clean. The condom tail also gives you something to grab onto if the wire should break where it attaches to the egg, as sometimes does happen.

For maximum security reserve some toys for anal play and others for vaginal play. If you mix them, be sure to keep them condom-covered during use. Even if they *have* been condom-covered, the condom has been removed, and a new condom placed on them, items that have been in a rectum should be thoroughly cleaned before being placed in a vagina.

Someone somewhere will doubtless try to prove us wrong, but for all intents and purposes you cannot use too much lubricant for fisting and most especially for anal fisting. If you use latex gloves, use only water-based lubes, since *all* oil- and fat-based products—Vaseline® and baby oil, as well as massage oils, hand cremes, body lotions, moisturizers, coconut oil, cooking oil and the like—eat holes in latex quite large enough for sperm, viruses, and other micro-organisms to pass through. Oils and fats can also be unhealthy for mucous membranes; scented lubes should also not be used since they usually contain some alcohol, which may burn tender genital or rectal skin. We'll discuss fisting—both anal and vaginal—at greater length beginning on page 228.

Catheters & Sounds

The use of catheters and sounds is an extreme form of SM play. We cover it in this section rather than in "Playing On the Edge," above, simply because it is a more overtly sexual activity than those we address in that portion of this book.

A catheter is a flexible plastic tube ordinarily used to withdraw urine from the bladder in some medical procedures. Catheters are used in some SM play that involves control, intense sensation, humiliation, or long-term bondage, such as medical scenes. Medical sounds, which come in sets of graduated sizes, are rods of surgical steel ordinarily used to dilate or to

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search for foreign bodies in the urethra. Sounds are sometimes used in SM play for medical scenes and male genitorture.

The process of inserting a catheter through the urethra to the bladder is not complex, but if it is improperly introduced the catheter can damage the urethra. Inserting a sound into the urethra is both less and more dangerous than inserting a catheter: less, because a sound only goes several inches in the urethra in a flaccid penis, and more because sounds are made of metal and are altogether less forgiving than the plastic catheter tube.

The use of catheters and sounds in SM play is extreme because both procedures are technically invasive, in that they enter a sterile part of the body, and care must be taken to maintain that sterility. Since both instruments *can* be dangerous in untrained hands, people who want to use them should investigate their use personally, and learn about them from someone who already has wide experience.

Neither a catheter nor a sound should ever be introduced into the urethra of an erect penis.

Fisting

Vaginal

Like the use of catheters and sounds, fisting is an extreme form of SM play; and as with the use of catheters and sounds we cover it here rather than in "Playing On the Edge" because it is a more overtly sexual activity than the ones we address in that portion of this manual.

Fisting is not a typical SM or DS scene. It should not hurt, and the bottom *must* be in charge of the Top's speed and depth. If your mode of penetration is vaginal fisting, always go slowly and *always* let the bottom set the pace, telling the Top when to stay still, back off or out, or come forward. Tops should wear polyurethane or latex gloves and make doubly sure their nails are smooth. Use *way* too much lube: if the bottom requests more lube during the scene, the Top is not using enough, or has waited too long to replenish the supply. You can wet down water-based lubes when they begin to dry up and get tacky simply by misting them with water from a house-plant spray bottle. Using a small amount of lube containing on the Top's hand before putting on a glove provides extra protection.

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Begin fisting with one finger and progress slowly to two and more. Do not force your way at any time: make sure the bottom knows that if she wants more pressure she can tell you, or come after it herself. If the bottom feels or complains of any pain at all, the Top *must* back off. Fisting is *never* a pain scene; it is an activity participants should investigate intensely and personally before beginning to play, not only by taking a class with an experienced instructor, but also by getting a hands-on, one-on-one tutorial. For a detailed examination of vaginal fisting, see *A Hand in the Bush*, by Deborah Addington, noted in our Bibliography on p. 234.

Anal

Most of the information that applies to vaginal fisting applies to anal fisting as well. Since the anus is not designed to accept insertion as readily as the vagina is, it is even more important with anal fisting not to use force or to shove anything abruptly into the opening. Compared with the vagina the rectum produces virtually no natural lubrication. In addition, the rectal lining is extremely delicate, and the repeated rubbing of fisting causes it to burn, even with large amounts of lube. Consequently, some experienced fisters stop at this point; others find water-based lubes too thin to protect the tissues from damage, and despite the problems inherent in using oil-based lubes, prefer a thick, greasy lubricant such as Crisco®. If you use such a lubricant change gloves very frequently, since the AIDS virus can pass through even the microscopic holes you cannot see, but that oil does create in latex. Or else use a polyurethane glove, which will not disintegrate from oil as latex gloves will.

Before being fisted it is important to pay attention to your diet: avoid strawberries and other foods containing small seeds. Take a series of enemas before being fisted, in order to clean all fecal matter from the rectum and lower colon, but do not initiate high colonic irrigations, which only stir up matter that may descend in the middle of your scene. Not only is it considered impolite in most fisting circles to leave deposits on the Top's gloved hand, but excrement is gritty: if it is rubbed into the walls of the bowel inadvertently it can tear the rectal lining; those tears can become infected by the person's own excrement.

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As with vaginal fisting, anal fisting is *not* a pain scene. Indeed, these practices are arguably not SM or DS activities at all, and the nominal “bottom” is and must be in charge of the way the nominal “Top” moves his hand. No one should ever be fisted against her will, and in fisting the Top should always assume that his hand is in service to his bottom.

If a small amount of pink color appears in the lube, participants may want to slow down or stop the scene altogether. Some people believe this is enough of a sign of injury to warrant immediate medical attention. Others believe it is probably not a sign of injury. If the lube shows spots of red blood, however, or if the bottom has stomach pain or develops a low-grade fever within 72 hours, *go to the hospital immediately*. The nerve endings inside the colon register distension, but not pain: it is possible for someone to be seriously injured there without feeling any pain at all. Quick medical help is critical to deal with internal injuries, as peritonitis, an infection of the abdominal cavity, can result in a permanent colostomy, and can even be fatal.

Like vaginal fisting, only more so, anal fisting is best learned from an experienced player who is also a skilled teacher. Bert Herrman’s *Trust* and Bill Brent’s *Ultimate Guide to Anal Sex for Men* (see Bibliography, page 236) provide an excellent overview and excellent directions about fisting, and are eloquent about the spiritual dimensions of the practice; still, do not attempt to learn fisting from a book alone.

A Basic SM Safety Kit

SM, as we’ve said, is a sophisticated sexual activity that does entail some risks. No one wants to need the contents of a first aid kit, but no one wants to be without those items either, when the moment calls for them. Therefore, in the interests of enabling you to play as safely as possible, we offer our version of the most basic SM safety kit, which is best kept in your playroom. Wherever it is, all players should know about it: even Tops slip, fall, or become incapacitated, and bottoms, too, should be able to apply safety measures. A mini version of this kit can be stowed in a play bag: it might come in handy at a party or elsewhere.

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Ace® bandage, 1 @ 3" wide

Adhesive tape, 1 roll @ 1" wide

Alcohol wipes, 10, foil-wrapped

Alcohol (isopropyl or rubbing), 1 bottle

Aloe vera gel, 1 tube

Anaesthetic spray, 1 container

Antibiotic ointment, 1 tube

Arnica gel, 1 tube

Band-Aids™, 1 variety pack

Bandage, 1 sterile roll

Bandage, 1 triangular sling

Betadine®, or other providone-iodine disinfectant, 1 bottle

Flashlight, 1

Gauze pads, 10 sterile, 4" x 4"

Gloves, 1 box, polyurethane or latex

Hydrogen peroxide

Ice pack, 1, already in freezer; or chemical ice that does not require freezing

Scissors, 1 paramedic or EMT

Tweezers

Recommended: First Aid and CPR training and current certificates

Erotic Power Play: A Selected, Annotated SM Bibliography

In our estimation these books and magazines are among the most informative and readable resources available to date for learning about erotic power play. Books from large publishers can be ordered easily by any bookstore, but special-interest magazines and books from small presses may not be generally available. Therefore, we have included those publishers' addresses. Prices change too frequently to be usefully listed in a book like this, whose shelf-life may exceed current rates of exchange, so if you do not purchase them at your local bookstore, query the publishers. Alternatively, you can go through a generalized online venue, such as www.amazon.com or www.barnesandnoble.com, or through a site that speaks to your particular desires, such as www.abebooks.com (used, rare, and out-of-print), www.aks-books.co.uk/books.htm (Victorian domestic discipline), or www.kinkybooks.com/default.htm or www.qualitysm.com (BDSM and related matters). In addition, many of the books in this bibliography can also be ordered by mail from QSM, Department Q, P. O. Box 880154, San Francisco, CA 94188, USA if you have a valid MasterCard or Visa and have sent QSM a signed statement saying you are over 21 years of age. Since most of the books in this Bibliography are published by only three companies, we list those publishers' addresses and URLs here for easy reference. They are,

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www.greenerypress.com

Books

Abernathy, Christine, *Miss Abernathy's Concise Slave Training Manual*. 104pp, San Francisco: Greenery Press, 1996. [Whether you own or wish to own a human property, whether you are owned or wish to be owned, this delightful volume provides basic guidelines that will enable you to fulfill your chosen role with intelligence, good sense, dignity, and pleasure. Writing with the same gracious style and noble intent that she recognizes as essential attributes for sound training, Miss Abernathy is surely the Miss Manners of slavery etiquette.]

Abernathy, Christine. *Training With Miss Abernathy: A Workbook for Erotic Slaves and Their Owners*. 160pp. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 1998. [Miss Abernathy's follow-up to her *Concise Slave Training Manual* contains fifty invaluable transformative training lessons for the erotic slave, as well as reference material that can be used by both Owner and slave. The lessons, exercises, meditations, and reading suggestions on all aspects of erotic slavery run the gamut from managing a household for your Dom/me to sexual service to planning outside excursions. As ever, Miss Abernathy's perspective is that slavery and service are noble endeavors.]

Adamson, Sara, *The Marketplace, The Slave, The Trainer*. Fairfield, CT: Mystic Rose Books, 1994, 1994, 1995. Length varies. [The editor of *Looking for Mr. Preston* has modeled her trilogy about the Marketplace—a secret, consensual Master/Mistress and slave society—on Preston's own famous Master-pieces, and explores the training of only the best servants and slaves, the work of a trainer, and the nature of the famous Marketplace itself. In part by setting her scene in the present, Adamson

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has taken slave training out of its usual fantasy setting and written three relatively realistic novels that are pleasurable, thoughtful, and useful for both novices and established players seeking hot scenes along with informed insight regarding slave training. Sara Adamson is a pen name for Laura Antoniou.]

Addington, Deborah, *A Hand in the Bush: The Fine Art of Vaginal Fisting* 97 pp + Resource Guide. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 1997 [Many Greenery Press books have a delightfully smart-alecky attitude, and this is among the smart-aleckiest. Though Addington presents herself as both a possessor and a lover of cunts (her very explicitly chosen term, over all the obvious alternatives and objections) *A Hand in the Bush* will be useful as well to those who only love them. FAQs and facts, procedural protocols and safety information, a thorough how-to manual manual, a chapter of poetry and prose by other cunt lovers, and drawings by Megan Rothrock and Jill McCutcheon that are both anatomically and politically correct – all except the last filled with the jolliest sorts of irreverence and wisecrackery – makes this a perfect sweetheart of a book for anyone interested in hand in glove loving.]

Baldwin, Guy, *Ties That Bind: The SM/Leather/Fetish Erotic Style—Issues, Commentaries and Advice*. Los Angeles: Daedalus Publishing Co., 2003. 239 pp. [Guy Baldwin was one of the very first psychotherapists to disclaim the prejudice that consensual SM is a mental disorder. He is also a popular speaker who raised awareness of, and money for, gay and leather causes around the nation as International Mr. Leather 1989 and Mr. National Leather Association, 1989-90. As columnist for *Drummer* beginning in 1987 he introduced thoughtful SM education to what had been chiefly a gay male fantasy magazine. *Ties That Bind*—a selection of Baldwin's columns gracefully edited by Joseph Bean, with a Preface by Gayle Rubin—will allow his fans and students, past, present, and future, to appreciate his understanding that SM can be a passionate road to spiritual self-awareness, as well as one of intense erotic gratification.]

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Baldwin, Guy, working with "a grateful slave," *Slavecraft: Roadmaps for Erotic Servitude – Principles, Skills, and Tools*, 178 pp including Introduction and Afterword by Patrick Califia. Los Angeles: Daedalus Publishing Co., 2002 [Where BDSM is concerned, a lot of people who like SM take pleasure in giving or receiving intense sensation, and a lot who like BD take pleasure in the sight, feel, or imposition of restraint and, sometimes, punishment. Because these activities tend to be physical, their realities are easy to see, so people can learn to negotiate them pretty readily. But a lot of people who like DS are driven by the erotic fantasy of owning or being owned as human property. The emotional and psychological subtleties of realizing such a fantasy can be extremely complex, and the pitfalls can be treacherous. Guy Baldwin is the genuine article: an Old Guard leatherman, serious and active for more than 40 years. As an advice columnist and a psychotherapist who works largely with other gay leathermen he has also heard many tales of Masters and slaves trying to make their relationships work. He lends the wisdom gleaned from his considerable experience to the first-person account of "a grateful slave" explaining some of the realities he encountered and the lessons he learned pursuing his dream of being owned. This is not the only take on devout, impassioned, erotic slavery, and as Patrick Califia's wise commentary shows, other equally knowledgeable and thoughtful players may hold differing views. But as a set of roadmaps this is one of very few indispensable books for would-be Masters, Mistresses, pets, submissives, and slaves, as well as for those occasional players whose hearts, minds, or groins resonate to the music of erotic possession or servitude.]

Bannon, Race, *Learning the Ropes: A Basic Guide to Safe and Fun S/M Lovemaking*. 158 pp. Los Angeles: Daedalus Publishing Company, 1992 [In what has often been a quiet and unassuming fashion, Race Bannon has taught, trained, and otherwise enabled some of the best-known players in the wide BDSM communities. Though he has been a familiar face at leather conferences for many years, *Learning the Ropes* is his first book. Accessible, friendly, and wonderfully easy to understand, the detailed information and very plausible scenarios in this pansexual primer successfully assure the wary novice that "S/M is lovemaking," as the author says.]

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Bean, Joseph, *Flogging*. 116 pp + Appendices. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 2000 ["You cannot learn flogging – Top or bottom – from a book." With this opening sentence one of the real whip masters of his generation teaches the reader everything you *can* learn about flogging from a book. Using a few could-be-real fictional scenarios as his demo models, the author moves easily from the basic techniques and strokes of whipping, through descriptions of various flogging implements, to the psychology and ecstasy of whipping and being whipped, to the purchase and care of flogging instruments. Bean includes canes, paddles, and crops in his conversation, but whips, from floggers to single-tails and leather to horsehair, are obviously his passion. If whips hold any interest for you, you probably need this book, as well as a good whip and a play partner with complementary tastes in flagellation – the Top to your bottom or the bottom to your Top. After you come down you can relax with the marvelous historical Appendix by Gayle Rubin, "Milestones in Modern Whipmaking."]

Bean, Joseph, *Leathersex: A Guide for the Curious Outsider and the Serious Player*. Los Angeles: Daedalus Publishing Co., 2003. 217 pp. [Even more than a guide, this book is a long meditation on leathersex by one of the community's most gentle and thoughtful writers, who also happens to be one of its most experienced players, and one of its noblest men.]

Bean, Joseph, *Leathersex Q & A: Questions About Leathersex and the Leather Lifestyle Answered*. 227 pp + Book List and Index. Los Angeles: Daedalus Publishing Co., 1996. [Joseph Bean has been involved with the world of leathersex since he was too young to vote, and has probably written more about it than any several other people. After he started writing editorials for the late-lamented *Drummer* magazine in 1987, and appearing in print and on one of San Francisco's first cable television stations as the Leathersex Faerie, people began writing to him asking for information, advice, and opinions. He answered many of the letters he received, but says, he did not keep copies of his replies. Although this book is largely comprised of genuine questions that genuine people had about SM from 1987-1995, then, the answers were all written specifically for the book. Fortunately, and because the author chose them for that purpose, most of

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the questions are those perennial ones we all had once upon a time, or will have at a time in the future. Even more fortunately, Joseph Bean is among the best informed, most gracious, and most compassionate of men. Who better to answer these questions, some of which are probably just like yours?]

Brame, Ph. D., Gloria G. *Come Hither: A Commonsense Guide to Kinky Sex*. 335 pp., including kinky reading list, glossary, hanky code, and index. New York, Fireside, 2000 [The lead author of *Different Loving* has written a user-friendly guide to the world of kink. It contains a brief how-to, but more importantly discusses such topics as what's normal, why pain can feel good, what to do when your partner is hostile to your kink, what happens at SM clubs, being kinky and having children, and much, much more.]

Brame, Gloria; Brame, William; and Jacobs, Jon, *Different Loving: An Exploration of The World of Sexual Dominance and Submission*. New York: Villard, 1993. 539 pp. [The authors spoke with more than 200 people who are active in at least some facets of SM and built 26 insightful chapters around individual profiles that resulted. The famous (Fakir Musafar) and the pseudonymous (Bambi Bottom) are equally important, because their contributions about Lifestyle DS, Bondage, Whipping, Body Modification, Fetishes, etc. derive from personal experience. Neither a primer nor a how-to manual, this is the first deeply researched, thoughtfully composed overview we've seen about a whole erotic way of life; it sets high standards for whatever works of a similar nature may follow.]

Brent, Bill, *The Ultimate Guide to Anal Sex for Men*. 230 pp + Resources. San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2002 [This volume is loaded with vital information about man-to-man ass play that is easy to find, easy to read, and easy to understand. The book is obviously written by someone who has come to his knowledge through wide, deep, and respectful experience with his subject, and his eloquence makes very palpable the notion originally put forth by Jack Morin (see below) that anal sex involves making love to the ass, not just ploughing on in. From demolishing the thoughtless myths that mask fears and ignorance about ass play, to proper

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hygiene and health, to the delicate arts of anilingus, this really is an ultimate guide: a sort of master class in its subject, with lab-work exercises included for your happy delectation at home or wherever you make love.]

Califia, Patrick, *Sensuous Magic: A Guide for Adventurous Couples*. San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2001. 185 pp. [Clear, clean, and knowledgeable instruction augmented by 10 hot heterosexual vignettes that demonstrate how theory might be put into practice. One of the best-informed and best-written SM how-to guides available.]

Califia, Patrick (editor), *The Lesbian S/M Safety Manual*. [This book, once published by Lace Publications, and later by Alyson, has been out of print for years, but it is worth searching out from the used book bins or garage sales because it is an excellent – even indispensable – easy-to-follow guide for safe play for anyone who places with women, by one of BDSM's premier writers; not for lesbians only.]

Califia, Patrick, *Macho Sluts*. Los Angeles: Alyson, 1988. 296 pp. [A modern classic: heavy SM erotic fiction, primarily but by no means exclusively for lesbian women; *not* for the faint of heart.]

Campbell, Drew, *The Bride Wore Black Leather ... And He Looked Fabulous: An Etiquette Guide for the Rest of Us*. 159 pp + Bibliography and Index. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 2000 [Perusing shelves of traditional etiquette guides with their questions about how to behave when the maid who's clearing the dinner dishes piles them disrespectfully one atop another, or how to hold our skirts when curtsying before a Queen, Drew Campbell saw none concerned with the proper way to introduce your pansexual polyamorous SM Pagan family to your sister's Southern Baptist in-laws, or to determine whether the woman with the three-day stubble you've just met is transitioning or dressing and in which direction, or to answer people who ask about your orientation or proclivities when you don't wish to discuss them. Though traditional protocols are meaningful in high leather slave training, the questions people ask in the queerer communities more often have to do with how and when to inquire

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about another person's gender, orientation, or desires so as not to give offense; how to come out; or how to address a Master you routinely top when he is topping his female boi who happens also to be your Absolute Mistress. In these ways, queer – or, as he says, *altsex* – protocol has some real-life meaning, and in order to rectify somewhat a situation of incivility he found distressing, Campbell wrote this properly cheeky “etiquette guide for the rest of us.” Based on the author’s conception of etiquette as “manners that treat people well,” *The Bride Wore Black Leather...* defines a need we did not even know we had – for an altsex etiquette guide – by the simplest possible expedient: filling it.]

Cassidy, John, *The Klutz Book of Knots: How to Tie the World's Most Useful Hitches, Ties, Wraps, and Knots—a Step-by-Step Manual*. Klutz Press (2170 Staunton Court, Palo Alto, CA, 94306), 1985. [The title and subtitle tell most of the tale, but what makes this book especially useful is that the heavy cardboard pages are die-cut so you can practice tying each knot as you follow the elegantly simple illustrated instructions, using two pieces of knot-length rope that are also part of the package. This is not specifically a bondage or an SM book, but demonstrates how easy it is to get along in the world of SM without a lot of expensive “SM” equipment. This book has been difficult to find recently.]

Cowan, Lyn, *Masochism: A Jungian View*. Spring Publications (P.O. Box 222069, Dallas, TX 75222), 1982. [An informed, thoughtful, and eloquently written book by a psychotherapist who has a deep understanding of the spiritual nature of bottoming. Give this to your therapist if s/he says, “You do *what*?” This book has been difficult to find recently.]

Daniels, Michael. *Woof! Perspectives into the Erotic Care & Training of the Human Dog*. 121 pp. + resources and references. Las Vegas: A Boner Book, The Nazca Plains Corporation, 2003 [A first-paw look at the roles, gear, behaviors, scenes, ethics, hows and whys of doggie roleplay for Owners, Trainers, and human dogs and pups, all told from both a Trainer/Owner and human pup perspective. Includes a short story at the end, and there are resources, articles, products at their site, www.leatherdog.com.]

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Easton, Dossie and Catherine A. Liszt, *The Bottoming Book: Or, How To Get Terrible Things Done To You By Wonderful People*, illustrations by Fish. San Francisco: Greenery Press 1994. 104pp. [Right bottoming lies at the very foundation of a good SM scene. Yet, like any form of right living, it is not automatic: you can't give away what you don't already have, so as a bottom you must *have* power if you're going to *give* power to your Top in a real exchange of erotic energy. Right bottoming has long been a project for Dossie Easton, who coined the term "full-power bottom," and who has now collaborated with Catherine Liszt, author (as Lady Green) of *The Sexually Dominant Woman* to address a subject almost no one talks about because almost no one understands. They also cover other important topics, such as exploring various SM scenes and roles, negotiating your wants and needs, and distinguishing fantasy from reality in SM play; but the heart of *The Bottoming Book* is the authors' discussion of bottoming as a way to enable everyone in a scene to feel and be powerful.]

Easton, Dossie and Catherine A. Liszt, *The Topping Book: Or Getting Good At Being Bad*, illustrations by Fish. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 1995. 104 pp. [The authors of *The Bottoming Book* have written a witty companion volume that is thoughtful in a way that can only come from applying intelligence to a wealth of experience. They share their knowledge by describing some of their own scenes, both good and bad; their discussions of the nature of Topping and the nature of spiritual sexuality are worth the book's price alone. As a wise Top will read *The Bottoming Book*, so a wise bottom will become acquainted with *The Topping Book*.

Easton, Dossie, and Catherine Liszt, *When Someone You Love is Kinky*. 133 pp + Glossary and Resource Guide. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 2000 [How do we tell other people our deep secrets? How do we tell them those secrets if we have reason to believe they will not understand? What if we think they'll disapprove? What if we expect they'll think badly of us when we tell them? Do we hold our tongues and live our lives in secret? Or do we tell and risk the consequences? For many people in the BDSM communities these are not idle questions, any more than they have been

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for people in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities, and the answers are not always so simple as the glib among us would prefer. Dossie Easton and Catherine Liszt have done a major favor for everyone who deals with alternative sexualities, as well as for everyone who deals with people who deal with alternative sexualities, by exposing the dilemma in a bright and compassionate manner, offering experiences from their own and other people's lives in order to illuminate some of the paths available for coming out or for hearing another person's coming out process.]

Green, Lady, *The Compleat Spanker*. 70 pp + Appendices. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 1996 [Lots of people who don't even think they like SM like spanking, and lots of people who say they don't like it do it anyway. Along with rope and a whip, spanking – absolutely free and always available – is a most primal image of erotic power exchange. Yet, many people who like the combination of hand and ass don't know how to spank or be spanked safely and for pleasure, and many others don't know why they like it, or crave it even when they don't like it. Here in one tidy volume are the answers: a complete guide to the Who What When Where Why How and How Much of spanking.]

Green, Lady, *The Sexually Dominant Woman: A Workbook for Nervous Beginners*. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 1992. 57 pp. [This classy little item is not just for dominant women: it provides a framework on which any sexually dominant novice can hang her or his fantasies when starting to put them into practice. Sybil says she wishes she'd had this booklet when she started playing.]

Greene, Gerald and Caroline, *S-M: The Last Taboo*. New York: Grove Press, 1974, Ballantine Books, 1978, Blue Moon, 2003. 345pp. [Good traditional, heterosexually-oriented overview.]

Haberman, Hardy, *Family Jewels: A Guide to Male Genital Play and Torment*. 123 pp. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 2001 [Looking at them or holding them in your hand you may ask: What? How? How much?

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When? Where? Why? and Why not? Haberman has the answers. If you've got 'em or if you play with people who have 'em, for pleasure and for safety's sake, this is the book you *need*.]

Herrman, Bert, *Trust: The Hand Book: A Guide to the Sensual and Spiritual Art of Handballing*. Alamo Square Books: barnesandnoble.com, kinkybooks.com 1991, 124 pp. [Handballing, also known as fisting, is the process of inserting a whole hand into another person's body cavity. This is not strictly an SM activity, but it warrants attention from advanced players and those who want to play with advanced players. Though *Trust* is concerned with anal fisting, its practical advice, its concern with health and safety, and its spiritual bent make the book valuable for anyone concerned with erotic intensity.]

Jacques, Trevor, *On the Safe Edge: A Manual for SM Play*. WholeSM Publishing (P.O. Box 75075-880, 20 Bloor Street East, Toronto, Ontario M4W 3T3, Canada). 251 pp + appendices. [The author had three consultants, including a physician, and though the organization is somewhat confusing this book contains some of the most thorough information—including medical illustrations—available on health and safety, both in general and in the specific context of SM play.]

Johnson, V.M., *To Love, To Obey, To Serve: Diary of an Old Guard Slave*. 337 pp + Afterword. Fairfield, CT: Mystic Rose Books, 1999 [Before there was "safe, sane, and consensual," there was Viola Johnson. In the world of real and only sometimes erotic slavery that John Preston and later Laura Antoniou turned into hot fiction, there was Viola Johnson. In a world of slavery so fully rounded there was no concept of edge play, there was Viola Johnson. And now, for anyone who wants to know something about the reality that underlies today's socially acceptable BDSM with its munches and dungeon monitors and clearly defined conventions, there is Viola Johnson's journal. This is the story of how a "nice, conservative, straight" black middle-class Republican with a graduate degree in education found her identity as another woman's slave. It is the story of how she managed multiple households, built complex dungeons in short weeks from the bare

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walls, became famous as both a remarkable slave and a remarkable trainer, drank blood, was sexual with men to please her owners, became friends with the finest of the “old guard,” met everyone and went everywhere in the revolutionary days of the early SM community, and ended up with the National Leather Association’s Lifetime Achievement Award and the Pantheon of Leather’s Forebear Award. *To Love, To Obey, To Serve* is also a love story. It begins in December, 1980, 11 days short of seven years after the author and her Mistress “stood before G-d and vowed to spend the rest of our lives together if the Lord would so bless us.” It ends 15 years later, on New Year’s Eve, 1995: “It’s been 25 years. I think I love her more today than I did the day we were married.” Johnson never set out to write this book that was never meant to be read: she was ordered to do so by the first Mistress her Mistress gave her to, and it just grew to become this spectacular written record.]

“A Lady,” *A Guide to the Correction of Young Gentlemen: The Successful Administration of Physical Discipline to Males—by Females*. Delectus Books: aks-books.co.uk. 1991. 113 pp. [The publishers claim this “flagellation cookbook” was reprinted from the last remaining copy of a guide written in 1924 and banned and burned the same year. Some reviewers have questioned whether the publication hype is just a ploy, but we don’t think it really matters. *A Guide to the Correction of Young Gentlemen* is the best female *discipline* guide we’ve ever seen. Following the author’s instructions regarding children probably constitutes child abuse; as SM instruction or fantasy it is clear, concise, and complete, written from the behavior modification perspective of a Victorian Governess who believes in birching, tawsing, and otherwise ruling her charges with gracious form and an iron hand.]

Lorelei, Mistress. *A Charm School for Sissy Maids*. 150 pp. San Francisco, Greenery Press, 2001 [Designed for both the Mistress who wishes to train her sissy maid, and the unowned submissive who wishes to polish his skills, this four week course covers every aspect of sissy maid training. Clothing, makeup, and body preparation; attitude, demeanor and deportment; maid duties and how to perform them; sex training and accepting discipline – all

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and more are covered here, plus a short story at the end of each week and a sissy daily checkup sheet at the end of the book that begins with, "Did you wear your panties today? If not, write 'I am a happy panty slave' 100 times, neat and even!"

Lotney, Karlyn. *The Ultimate Guide to Strap-On Sex*. 167 pp. + bibliography, resources, and index. San Francisco, Cleis Press, 2000 [Karlyn, known as Fairy Butch, tells you how and where to chose harnesses, dildoes, vibrators, and lubricants, and, once you have them, how to use them so that all – women, men, lesbian, straight, gay, bi, and transgendered – will be happy on both ends. This ultimate guide also includes tips on clit pumping and other advanced sexual techniques, as well as a thorough resource guide of books, magazines, retail, mail order, and Internet outlets.]

Mains, Geoff, *Urban Aborigines*. Los Angeles: Daedalus Publishing, 20th Anniversary Edition, 2002 [1984], 187 pp. [Gay male sociological overview of the 1980s SM scene. One of the best book-length explanations of erotic power play around, whatever your gender or orientation.]

Masters, Peter. *Look Into My Eyes: How to Use Hypnosis to Bring Out the Best in Your Sex Life*. 151 pp. + further studies and resources. San Francisco, Greenery Press, 2001 [The author, a clinical hypnotherapist, sports instructor, computer expert, and writer, has been using hypnosis with sex for the last 20 years and shares his knowledge and experience in a clear, informative, and entertaining manner. How to hypnotize your partner, and then how to combine hypnosis with role-play, BDSM, masturbation, fantasy, and overcoming inhibitions are some of the topics covered, along with hypnotic scripts and what *not* to do.]

McNeill, Elizabeth, *9-1/2 Weeks*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978; Berkley paperbacks, 1979. [The perhaps fictional account of a modern executive woman's gradual erotic enslavement by a modern executive man. The ending doesn't seem to jibe with the body of the work, but it's still a hot fantasy and an easy read. Yes, this is the book on which the movie was based.]

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Mentor, *Finding the Sensual Submissive Woman*; *Finding Your Dominant Woman*; *Four Sensual Scenes for Beginners—volumes I & II*; *Kinky Computers: Finding D&S on On-Line Services*; *The Tightest Hug: Bondage 101*. \$5.00 each from Diversified Services (P.O. Box 35737, Brighton, MA 02135). [These and other pamphlets in the Mentor series are written by John Warren, author of *The Loving Dominant*. They are clear, concise, and informative.]

Midori, *The Seductive Art of Japanese Bondage*, photographs by Craig Morey. 159 pp + Bibliography and Resources. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 2001 [This oversized volume is the most luscious instruction manual we know of that has serious BDSM applications. Built around a series of carefully detailed written directions, the author shows anyone so inclined how to execute a dozen classic harnesses, suspensions, and ties from a cultural oeuvre that is justly famous among rope aficionados. *The Seductive Art of Japanese Bondage* is divided into three principal sections: The Heart contains introductory material, including background about Japanese rope bondage and the process of a Japanese rope bondage scene; The Body largely concerns the rope itself, along with minimal but well-chosen safety considerations; the seven positions in The Techniques lead you step-by-step through eleven rope practices, from “Simple Breast Bondage” and “Hog Tie” to a twelfth practice: “Aftercare.” The how-to drawings are precise and lucid, and – especially considering how elaborate and elegant the results can be – the knots Midori chooses are simple to learn and use. Japanese rope bondage is only one of the subjects that has made Fetish Diva Midori a famous favorite on the SM lecture circuit, and Craig Morey’s full-color photographic portraits of examples of the author’s completed Japanese bondage help make the book obliquely very sexy: *seductive*, as the title says.]

Miller, Philip, and Devon, Molly, *Screw The Roses, Send Me The Thorns: The Romance and Sexual Sorcery of Sadomasochism*. Mystic Rose Books (P.O. Box 1036/SMS, Fairfield, CT 06432), 1995. [The useful information in this book is often accompanied by helpful photos and illustrations, including designs for making your own large and small SM and bondage toys, but philosophy, education, and resource appendices make this rather

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more than a how-to manual. The authors write with a sense of humor that reflects their style as a heterosexual male dominant/female submissive couple from the East Coast of the U.S.]

Moore, Thomas, *Dark Eros: The Imagination of Sadism*. Spring Publications (P.O. Box 222069, Dallas, TX 75222), 1990. [A fairly cerebral Jungian interpretation of de Sade's writing and thought as a reflection of human nature's essential shadow by an author who later became famous for his contributions to the psychology of spirituality – and the spirituality of psychology. A good book for loosening the traditional beliefs about the wonders of purity and innocence with which virtually all modern Westerners are inculcated, and for freeing the dark side from the imprisonment of its stigma.]

Morin, Jack, *Anal Pleasure and Health*, 2nd edition. Yes Press (938 Howard Street, San Francisco, CA 94103), 1981, 1986. 269 pp. [The title says it all. Even if someone else had taken on this highly-charged topic, chances are Morin's book would still be the best, as it's educational, entertaining, and unabashedly comfortable with a subject most people only talk about with embarrassment or in the dark.]

Moser, Charles, Ph.D., M.D., *Health Care Without Shame: A Handbook for the Sexually Diverse and Their Caregivers*. 120 pp. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 1999 [Many people whose sexualities, sexual lifestyles, or sexual behaviors are not universally understood or accepted in the mainstream do not get the health care they need and deserve. In part that is because they do not know how to talk to doctors, and in part it is because doctors do not know how to talk to them. Charles Moser, a physician, Dean of Professional Studies and Professor of Sexology at San Francisco's Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, and founder of the American College of Sexual Medicine and Health, has set out to change things. The writing in his extraordinarily user-friendly handbook is clear, simple, and direct, so that the information it contains will be as useful as possible to the greatest possible number of people; and it is equally intended for people who have to talk with health care providers about

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sexual matters or body parts, and for health care providers who have to listen to patients who are sexual beings. Moreover, the book goes beyond the important but narrow realm of sexuality to offer basic information so that mutual intercourse ("communication," according to Webster) can take place between doctor and patient in a satisfactory manner. As Moser says, "Health care professionals cannot give top-notch care to someone whose lifestyle they don't understand or don't approve of. Sexual minorities cannot get the best that the health care system has to offer if they refuse to use that system, or if they withhold information out of fear or shame." This is really a book that *everybody* should read, because every health care provider must communicate with everyone who has a body, and vice-versa.]

Moser, Charles, Ph. D., M. D., and Hardy, Janet. *Sex Disasters and How to Survive Them*. 168 pp. + index. San Francisco, Greenery Press, 2002 [Moser and Hardy talked with a variety of helping professionals including sex educators, cops, counselors, lawyers, and EMTs about what to do when things go wrong: the condom breaks, you discover women's lingerie in your boyfriend's closet, a cop is at the door. Funny, reliable advice you hope you will never need, but indeed some day may.]

Preston, John, *I Once Had a Master, Entertainment for a Master, The Love of a Master*. [Lengths vary. Although they are out of print and somewhat difficult to find as of this writing, these books have appeared from a variety of publishers over the years, including Alyson and, most recently, Kensington (850 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022), and are likely to be back in print again some day from somewhere. They are worth the search or the wait. Preston was the dean of gay male SM fiction writers until his death in 1994. In his best-known classic, *Mr. Benson* a wealthy, erudite master trains his ideal slave boy. In this modern classic series Preston describes one man's progress from his introduction to SM, to his training by older leathermen, to his mature life which includes his own history both as a slave and as a Master, training new slaves.]

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Réage, Pauline, *The Story of O*. New York: Ballantine Books 1979. (Grove Press, 1965). 200 pp. [The classic modern novel of a woman's erotic enslavement by her aristocratic lover and a group of his friends.]

Rinella, Jack, *The Master's Manual: A Handbook of Erotic Dominance*. Los Angeles: Daedalus Publishing Co., 1994, 197 pp. [Rinella is a gracious host through what is to date the only book dedicated to the topic of how and why to be an SM Master or Mistress, with some parallel information about how and why to be an SM slave.]

Rinella, Jack, *Partners in Power*. 174 pp. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 2003 [For much of its career in the public eye, consensual sadomasochism has been seen as a lifestyle for the single and the polyamorous, as if everyone who cared about this form of eroticism satisfied himself at play parties with multiple partners. To some extent those of us who write or teach about leathersex conspired in this presentation, perhaps because so much of the early education about and support for its activities came from the organized BDSM communities. Yet, a great if unknown percentage of SM play and DS lifestyle really takes place in the privacy of monogamous couples' bedrooms and homes, where few or no other people are privy to the whips and chains or even the simplest spankings and agreements about obedience. At last, on behalf of the partnered among us – whether mono-, bi-, multi-, or polyamorous – Jack Rinella has written a book about the relationships behind what we still sometimes call erotic energy *exchange*. Rinella is a gay Master who has been a slave and been married to a woman. He is educated, thoughtful, and thorough in his discussions of communication, SM archetypes, and the ways energies are exchanged in various forms of consensual power dynamics. Not just for BDSM partners, this book is also for people who are curious and/or apprehensive about what their partners want them to do, and for the partners who want to do them. Since BDSM almost always involves two or more people, Rinella has served us all by articulating the complexities of leather relationships.] Robinson, Julian (Viscount Ladywood), *Gynecocracy*. Jennings, James, or Anonymous, *Harriet Marwood, Governess*; Jennings, James, or Anonymous, *Miss HighHeels* lengths, various publishers, various editions, including Grove Press, Blue Moon Books, Masquerade; intermittently in

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print or available in used and limited editions through online booksellers. [Victorian England generated a large quantity of erotic literature devoted to Petticoat Punishment or Petticoat Training. Novels in this genre generally purported to be written by aristocratic young men who by parental death or decree were compelled to submit to the harsh, fetishistic, erotic demands of one or more beautiful, dominant women. *Gynecocracy* is about one young man's coming of age under the stern hands of a governess, her maid, three female cousins, and a female-to-male transvestite. In *Miss High Heels* the androgynous, nasty adolescent heir to Britain's largest fortune is chastised and transformed by his step-sister and her dour physician aunt into a sweet, obedient girl, with great attention to fetishes for feet, white pumps with diamond buckles, and shoulder-length white lace kid gloves. *Harriet Marwood, Governess*, is the most tightly written of these three novels, and the one in which the mistress's sadism is most explicitly sexual. While he is young, Ms. Marwood diligently renders the comely Richard Lovel entirely dependent on her. She also whips and humiliates him into submission, and when he comes of age accepts the hand he begs her to accept in marriage only on condition that he sign over his whole estate to her, take her surname, and have a vasectomy. But Ms. Marwood is not truly satisfied until her pliant charge learns the erotic depths of what has finally become his own masochism.]

Roquelaure, A. N., *The Beauty Books*: New York, E.P. Dutton: *The Claiming of Sleeping Beauty* (1983), 253 pp; *Beauty's Punishment* (1984), 233 pp; *Beauty's Release* (1985), 238 pp; *Plume* (1999). [Slick erotica by Anne Rice (*Interview with the Vampire*) writing under a pseudonym; some of the best pansexual— gay, het, bi—SM/DS/fetish/fantasy fiction available in book form.]

Rosen, Michael, *Sexual Art: Photographs That Test the Limits*. 63 pp., Shaynew Press (P.O. Box 425221, San Francisco, CA 94142), 1994. [Transgressive images of explicit sex featuring "non-standard penetration," e.g., fisting, knives, and guns.]

Rosen, Michael A., *Sexual Magic: The SM Photographs*. Shaynew Press (P. O. Box 425221, San Francisco, CA 94142), 1986. 71 pp. [Fine art

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photographs, neither erotica nor pornography, of real people engaging in real erotic power play; text by the participants.]

Rosen, Michael A., *Sexual Portraits: Photographs of Radical Sexuality*. Shaynew Press (P. O. Box 425221, San Francisco, CA 94142), 1990. 64 pp. [Like Sexual Magic, these are photographs of real people expressing in their own lives what Rosen calls the Zero'th Amendment: "I do with my body and my life what I want and, so long as I harm no one, that's no one's business." Text by the participants.]

Samois (ed), *Coming to Power*. Boston: Alyson; 3d edition revised and updated, 1987 [1981]. 287 pp. [Political and academic lesbian SM articles and fiction. One of the best book-length introductions to erotic power play available, whatever your gender or sexual orientation.]

Stoller, Robert J. *Pain & Passion: A Psychoanalyst Explores the World of S & M*. Plenum Press (233 Spring Street, New York, NY 10013), 1991. 294 pp + notes & index. [Call me a pervert, but I really like to see an intelligent and curious man challenge his own beliefs. From reading the usual psychiatric texts Stoller once assumed SM was sick; then he met some real people who really played and changed his mind to a very large degree. This book is his report. Among its strengths are the author's willingness to share his journey with the reader, the questions his candor leads him to ask, and his very *un*psychiatric writing style. Among its weaknesses: Stoller really spoke to very few players, and even though they're experienced and articulate, his final view of SM is, to a considerable extent, limited to and by theirs.]

Taormino, Tristan, *The Ultimate Guide to Anal Sex for Women*. 131 pp + Resources and Appendix. San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998 [Early in her book Tristan Taormino notes the great void she had to fill, because when she started to write the only books generally available on anal sex were Jack Morin's bible and Bert Herrman's gay handballing gem (for both, see above). The official silence extended to her gynecological exams, during which she was never even asked about anal sex or health, even though she

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knew friends, lovers, writers, and other strangers who had been talking up the practice for years, decades, centuries, or millennia. (Perplexed health-care practitioners please see Charles Moser's *Health Care Without Shame*, noted above.) Apparently the ass has come of age though, because Cleis Press now offers Bill Brent's *The Ultimate Guide to Anal Sex for Men* (again, see above) in addition to *The Ultimate Guide to Anal Sex for Women*; both make terrific companion volumes to *Anal Pleasure and Health* and *Trust*. There isn't a great deal of difference between fucking a man's ass and fucking a woman's, so where pleasure and health are concerned there is a certain amount of overlap among these books. But each author approaches the ass from a unique angle, and Taormino's – "My goal is to give women knowledge about their bodies, so we may all have safe, pleasurable anal erotic experiences" – is remarkably fresh, engaging, enthusiastic, and downright user-friendly. It is the only one specifically directed to women and the people who love them, and the only one to really address the considerable extent to which heterosexual women use strap-ons to fuck their men, so some folks who might shy away from the other books may be better able to take up this one.]

Tanith, Lady, *A Tangled Web: The Art of Slavery—A Training Manual for Mistresses, Masters, and slaves*; and *S&M: A Player's Handbook*. Available from QSM. [These 30-page Xerographic guides to SM are plain, unpretentious, and clear. If you follow the *Player's Handbook* from beginning to end you can walk away with a basic mini course in SM under your belt; *Tangled Web* is more about dominance, submission, and training than about basic SM.]

Thompson, Mark, *Leatherfolk*. Boston: Alyson, 1991. 328 pp, \$19.95. [A former editor of *The Advocate* has collected essays by two dozen outstanding writers and spokespersons from Leather Nation. They document its history, attitudes, beliefs, and practices with a tilt toward SM's spiritual side. A must-read for people with a serious interest in the leather community, or its history.]

Townsend, Larry, *The Leatherman's Handbook II*, updated second edition. This book and its predecessor, the original *Leatherman's Handbook*, have

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appeared in too many editions to reliably keep tabs on, but it is worth searching out online. [The earliest gay male how-to SM book, equally useful for women who play with men. Early editions were limited by pre-HIV assumptions that unprotected sexual activity is safe; recent updates are not entirely current on health and safety issues, but they do include AIDS awareness. Hot stories of 1970s gay male SM play.]

Uncle Abdul, *Juice: Electricity for Pain and Pleasure*. 167 pp + Bibliography. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 1998 [This is a very funny book about a deadly serious subject, written by a long-time player who truly knows his stuff. Probably no two people agree absolutely about electroplay, so someone somewhere is certain to object. But from physics and physiology to psychology and scary pleasures, Uncle Abdul tells you what you can do safely with electricity and what you cannot do without danger; he tells you why; and he tells you how. The calm, matter-of-fact tone of his prose is so dry that his droll, wry wit is a shock, both alternating and direct, over and over again. If you ever plan to plug in more than a vibrator in your play, you need this book.]

Varrin, Claudia, *The Art of Sensual Female Dominance: A Guide for Women*. 205 pp + Shopping Guide, Recommended Reading, Glossary, & Index. Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1999 [If the fresh-faced, honor-roll captain of your local highschool's cheerleading squad wrote an SM guidebook for her girlfriends, their sisters, and their mothers, it could be *The Art of Sensual Female Dominance*. The gosh-gee-whillikers tone of the prose is pure Tupperware party vanilla SM. At the same time, Varrin knows what she's talking about and is able to offer up solid information about even fairly extreme play while making it sound a lot like whipping up a yummy fudgy chocolate cake from a simple new recipe while your naked, collared, butt-plugged, bull-whipped, and rope-wrapped hubby watches from his cage: isn't that *fun*??? Apparently Varrin is aiming at an untapped niche for her unique Intro to SM, which seems to be novices in the nation's suburban bedroom communities. Here and there she gets it wrong, as when she claims that "Caning is very severe [and] always leaves heavy marks"; but for the most part she gets her versions as right as the other good Intro guides.

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Occasionally she even takes on a question others have passed by, such as the odd pairing of bondage and discipline (BD), which, as she says, are “two entirely different things: Bondage is mainly an exercise in helplessness whereas discipline is being corrected or punished for some infraction....” Considering the speed with which businesses serving any specialized community come and go, her Shopping Guide is a daring adventure by itself. Much as the book is rooted in some kinky dominant Everywoman’s fantasy, it is, all in all, a genuine if unexpected contribution to the growing library of participant BDSM literature.]

Vera, Veronica. *Miss Vera’s Cross-Dress for Success: a Resource Guide for Boys Who Want to Be Girls*. 216pp. New York: Villard, 2002 [Veronica Vera, creator and founder of the world’s first crossdressing academy, has researched the Internet and the country and presents for you – along with fashion and makeup/beauty tips, personal stories, photographs, and much cheerleading – websites and a few phone numbers on all aspects of crossdressing and tranny life from accessories and bridal gowns to voice training and wigs and every letter in between, plus resources on counselors, support groups, political activists, medical information, conferences, religion, legal aid, publications, hotels and more.]

Warren, John, *The Loving Dominant*. New York: LPC Group, 2000, 339 pp. [Thoughtful, articulate primer from the vantage of a heterosexual male top who loves what he does and has been doing it for a long time.]

Warren, John, *Safe, Sane, Consensual, and Fun*. 128 pp. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 2002 [John Warren’s third book is based on his very successful *Sensual Scenes* booklets (now out-of print) and shares some of their content. However, the majority of the 15 BDSM scenes included here are new, exciting, and hot, containing bondage, spanking, role-play, and power exchange, and ranging from mild to wild, in a fictional format with marginal notes to guide you so you can recreate the scenes with your lover in a safe and sane fashion.]

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Wiseman, Jay, *Jay Wiseman's Erotic Bondage Handbook*. 320pp + Bibliography. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 2000 [To judge from his writings, Jay Wiseman must be the safest, most conservative, careful, and conscientious player in the recorded history of BDSM: the man leaves nothing unsaid and he advocates leaving pretty much nothing to chance. Still, as his narratives disclose, he has taken his own chances learning the ropes, and he has made his own mistakes. Sometimes it is exactly in those domains that he came to his most important knowledge, which is what he passes on in his books. And make no mistake: Wiseman has knowledge. This is the single most comprehensive erotic bondage book we know of, and it is hard to imagine that one written in the future will outstrip it. Certainly there are other approaches to bondage than his, such as the ones they teach in scouting, or those portrayed in Midori's *Seductive Art of Japanese Bondage* (see above) or in Joseph Bean's penetrating essay, "The Spiritual Dimensions of Bondage," in Mark Thompson's *Leatherfolk* (see above). But if you want to do erotic bondage on a desert island and you can only take one instruction book, this has got to be the one.]

Wiseman, Jay, *SM 101: A Realistic Introduction*. San Francisco: Greenery Press, 1993. 244 pp. [Since its publication this book has become a classic in the field. Fairly complete and chiefly heterosexually oriented. The author, a former medical student, is exceptionally good on physical safety, and provides a valuable pre-play negotiating guide even many advanced players could benefit from reading. The book is friendly and personal to a fault; though its chatty style sometimes clouds the book's organization, don't let that stop you from digging out the extensive information that's here.]

Magazines

With only three exceptions, whose addresses we have included here, all the best BDSM magazines of the 1980s and 1990s are gone, victims, we presume, of the internet. Nonetheless, these were terrific magazines for people in the scene, and every one of them is worth taking home if you find it lying around in some used book store or garage sale.

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Body Play and Modern Primitives Quarterly. [Fakir Musafar's absolutely unique, slick publication, featuring photo-and-text documentary essays of things your mother never knew she could tell you not to do with your body: piercing, foot binding, corsetry, scarification, ecstatic rites, gender transformations, and more. Not just SM, but educationally and emphatically SM-positive.]

Checkmate incorporating *DungeonMaste*. [T.A. Feldwebel, once editor of *DungeonMaster*, began *Checkmate* in the early 1990s. Then he bought *DungeonMaster* and had clearly the single best how-to SM magazine available by and about men playing with men, which was equally useful for women who play with men. Technical explanations, projects, and reviews with an opinionated eye guided by deep and wide experience.]

Drummer. [Gay male magazine intended to inform and titillate, with fiction, pictorials, and well-informed columns on the philosophy, psychology, and practical aspects of erotic power exchange.]

International Leatherman. [*International Leatherman's* combination of sophisticated thought, experienced reports, imaginative stories, and well-executed graphics made this entry in the field of gay leather magazines a leader in its field.]

Leather Journal, P.O. Box 381239, Hollywood, CA 90038-1239, www.theleatherjournal.com. [Stressing safe, sane, consensual play, *LJ* offers news that pertains to the entire leather community and club listings from around the world, so it is useful for finding people in the community who are also near you.]

On Our Backs, 3415 Cesar Chavez, Suite 101, San Francisco, CA 94110. [Not an SM publication, strictly speaking, *OOB*—billed as “Entertainment for the Adventurous Lesbian”—has supported *all* forms of woman-to-woman eroticism with a friendlier than neutral attitude toward erotic power play. Articles, pictorials, fiction, poetry, and an ongoing willingness to challenge boundaries with grace and humor.]

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Piercing Fans International Quarterly. [Longest-running magazine in the world devoted entirely to the practices of permanent and temporary piercing, including photo-essays and extensive how-to guidance from Gauntlet founder Jim Ward and others. Not just SM, but educationally and emphatically SM-positive.]

Prometheus, c/o The Eulenspiegel Society, P. O. Box 2783, New York, NY 10163-2783. [The Eulenspiegel Society, founded in 1971, is the oldest SM support group in the United States. *Prometheus*, the group's newsletter, expanded its size, format, and vision in the 1990s and became a community education magazine of some substance, written by, as well as for, its readers, including community leaders and newbies side by side.]

Servants' Quarters. [Literate, thoughtful, and even gently humorous, this 'zine, new in 1994, and gone in 1995, and "Devoted to the art of submission," was mostly written by, for, and about submissives and submissive behavior in a DS context.]

Sandmutopia Guardian. [Intended to educate rather than titillate, this was the longest-standing pansexual SM magazine around, devoted to practical, factual how-to information.]

Videos

The Pain Game and *Tie Me Up!* Two from Cléo Dubois's Academy of SM Arts, at www.sm-arts.com. *The Pain Game* is simply the best SM video we've ever seen, both for education and for hots. The camera-work is smooth, the lights are always warm but never hot, there are no accidental props left about, the score supports the intimate one-on-one scenes without intruding or demanding attention for itself, and the consistently high production values support the video's purpose. *The Pain Game* is not about dominance and submission, not about bondage, not about spanking as an art form all its own. Instead, *The Pain Game* is specifically about the generous gift and graceful receipt of intense physical sensation that has been thoughtfully negotiated, knowledgeably administered, and

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consciously embraced. In the first of two scenes a male bottom transforms sensation into a kind of pure energy through the inspiration of tantric or Lamaze breathing, and passes it back through respiration to Mistress Cléo. In the second, where Mistress Cléo uses clothespins and needles, it is possible to watch, in her female bottom's face, the way apprehension becomes fear, fear becomes anticipation, anticipation becomes excitement, and excitement grows into an ecstasy that makes her look as if she has seen the face of god.

More and more as the video proceeds, Cléo Dubois, not Mistress Cléo – ritualist, one of the San Francisco Bay Area's best-respected professional dominants, and proprietor of the Cléo Dubois Academy of SM Arts, who dominates her own video with the easy, graceful skill of someone who has really earned the right to call herself a Mistress – answers content questions for an off-camera interviewer; her answers flesh her out as a woman with a complex history and a complex set of relationships with her life, her SM, and her communities of the living and the dead. The people she names and the people whose pictures she displays were among the dearest and most valiant pioneers of a lifestyle that used to be the San Francisco SM community, and persists now in tiny pockets off the beaten track. It is a way of being, not a set of things to do, that is becoming lost in history. In part, it seems, Cléo Dubois made *The Pain Game* as a memorial to those people and their time, and so in part she made it be a video that might educate people who come after her. Then they, too, may learn what it is about this erotic practice and art form that has made it sacred, and that has enabled it to persist from one century to the next, from one millennium to another, celebrated and honored among those who know, from paintings on the potsherds of one society to the videos of another.

In *Tie Me Up!* Mistress Cléo explores and explains the sensory qualities of erotic bondage. She negotiates and plays out several live scenes with real players whose genuine engagement with their experiences repeatedly provides her with opportunities to educate. When one bottom is emotionally reactivated by a combination of suspension bondage and spanking, and starts to cry, Mistress Cléo uses the moment to demonstrate

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how a top has to remain alert to triggers that might reactivate her bottoms. She intersperses her demonstrations of various ties and positions with brief, straightforward, explications about negotiation, consent, and the need for safety. From time to time she illustrates her points with examples taken directly from scenes earlier in the video. In the most intense and most thoroughly negotiated scene, for example, she restrains a man who is ordinarily a Top, then engages in such rigorous nipple play that he uses a cautionary safeword (“yellow”). Later, during a discussion of safety and trust, she replays that moment, not only to show the importance of using and honoring safewords, but also to demonstrate that a sophisticated and experienced player like Jack is not embarrassed or demeaned by using this important tool, nor is the Mistress weak who honors it.

Story of k, *Journey Into Pain*, and its sequel, *Pain Suite*, are videos from the 1980s that are important for their BDSM historical value rather than as educational films. All are difficult to locate, although as of this writing you can buy them all online at www.smvideos.com; you can also buy *Story of k* and *Journey Into Pain* at www.diversifiedservices.com.

The Story of k was the first of a genre of SM videos using real players doing real SM, as opposed to models and actors pretending to spank, cane, etc. The marks on peoples’ bodies are real, not drawn on with lipstick. Shot at The Chateau, on San Francisco’s Army Street, this was the earliest attempt to show how safety, open communication, and the dynamics of pleasure and pain could interact between consenting adults to create a positive and potentially erotic experience. The film’s subtext was also unusual in that it was geared to attract female viewers, rather than simply catering to the standard male dominant fantasies of those times. Many people who have seen it comment particularly on the 1000-clothespin scene; the way k, played by Kaye Buckley, responds to being whipped; and at the end of the video, k’s sensuous dance of submission where she waxes her own breasts.

Journey Into Pain also features real people doing authentic, caring SM. Jim-Ed Thompson, who was also the Top in *The Story of k*, was a

bodybuilder who became Mr. San Francisco Leather 1987, and was later an editor for *Drummer* magazine. In this video, where he tops “Ellen” and “Jillana,” the intense, real SM can seem almost brutal, with action so connected, hot, and sexy it overcomes the amateurish sound production. That Jim-Ed Thompson was a gay man, and that he dominates these het scenes with such genuine passion, is one demonstration that the energy exchange of real SM transcends gender orientation: from the beginning to the end of this remarkable video the players’ caring for one another shines through. *Pain Suite* is the sequel to *Journey*, in which Jim-Ed and Ellen do more extreme, real SM, domination, and bondage.

Resources

In the course of this book we’ve mentioned some phone numbers and addresses you might wish to have easily at hand, and a few other books that really don’t belong in our SM Bibliography: here they all are. The SM organizations we list are by no means the only ones around: they are just the best-known and best-established. To find something closer to home, look in the links at www.theleatherjournal.com.

Books

Alman, Isadora, *Sex Information: Can I Help You?*. Down There Press, 938 Howard Street, San Francisco, CA 94103. [A book about her experiences as a volunteer at the San Francisco Sex Information switchboard.]

Bettinger, Michael, *It’s Your Hour: A Guide to Queer-Affirmative Psychotherapy*. 284 pp + Resources. Los Angeles, Alyson, 2001 [This book began quite literally as an “updated version” of *The Lavender Couch*. (See below.) In many regards it fulfills that original intention and then some, and it stands to be useful to people in the BDSM communities in the same sorts of ways. In addition, perhaps because of the 16-year gap between the books, *It’s Your Hour* also covers issues the earlier book did not, including a very brief observation for finding a kink-friendly therapist. But Hall and

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Bettinger are very different people, therapists, and authors, so having both books available can provide a wonderful perspective tantamount to a second opinion when considering your curiosity or interest in seeking counseling or therapy.]

Hall, Marny, *The Lavender Couch: A Consumer's Guide to Psychotherapy for Lesbians and Gay Men*. 184 pp + Resources & References. Los Angeles (Boston), Alyson, 1985. [Admittedly, this book is out of print and some of its resources and other data are out of date. Admittedly also, this book does not concern BDSM. Nonetheless, it provides a clear overview of the process of seeking, entering, and making good use of psychotherapy; and, since it is geared toward a population that is still, in some quarters, regarded as an "alternative" or "minority" sexuality, it contains excellent points of information for people involved in BDSM who want to consult therapists or other counselors.]

Musafar, Fakir, *Spirit & Flesh*. 196 pp, Arena Editions, 2002, Los Angeles: Daedalus Publishing Company, 2003. Also available at www.bodyplay.com. [195 black and white photos, shot by the master himself, make up this paean to authentic body modification. Fakir Musafar, who coined the terms "body play" and "modern primitive," devised a coffee table art book that is both an autobiographical record and a reflection of the impact his explorations have had on others, graphically illustrating a broad spectrum of physical experiences: bondage, sensory deprivation, tattooing, piercing, fetishes, and body rituals and modifications from 1948 to 2002. A beautifully produced collectors' item, there is nothing else like it anywhere. It is a "must have" for all serious body modifiers, as well as for tattoo and piercing studios. Introductory text by the author's friend Mark Thompson, editor of *Leatherfolk* (see Bibliography).]

Queen, Carol, *Exhibitionism for the Shy*. Down There Press. [The self-help book to end all self-help books: how to enjoy your own eroticism more. . . . and more. . . . and more.]

Rajneesh, Bhagwan Shree, *Only One Sky*. New York: Dutton, 1976, out of print. [One man's view of tantra.]

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Resources

For contact organizations in the BDSM communities, refer to our list on p. 112

Centers for Disease Control national AIDS hotline, 1-800-342-AIDS (1-800-628-9240).

Centers for Disease Control national STD hotline, 1-800-227-8922.

San Francisco Sex Information switchboard, Monday - Friday, 3:00 pm - 9:00 pm Pacific Standard Time, 1-415-989-7374 (1-415-989-SFSI or 1-877-7374 toll free). [Anonymous answers to some of your anonymous questions, and leads toward finding answers for most of the rest. The service is free, but SFSI cannot accept collect calls].

Kink Aware Professionals www.bannon.com/kap/

As we say in the "How to Find an SM-Positive (or Neutral) Therapist" section of this book, KAP was established by the founder and original publisher of Daedalus Publishing Company as a kind of clearing house for therapists, doctors, lawyers, alternative healers, and others who offer professional services to our communities. It has expanded tremendously over the years, but the people listed on the site are not vetted in any way, so while you have some reason to expect that a professional who goes out of her way to be KAP-listed will be understanding when you talk about your lifestyle, that is not guaranteed. Read the entries critically and, as always, caveat emptor.

Leather Archives & Museum

6418 N. Greenview Avenue

Chicago, IL 60626

tel: (773) 761-9200; fax: (773) 381-4657

www.leatherarchives.org

Rick Storer, Executive Director (as of December, 2003)

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As its website states, the Leather Archives & Museum is a 10,000 sq. foot, two-story building located on the North Side of Chicago, Illinois. It is devoted to preserving the history of leather/BDSM activities and communities, and to providing education about leather matters to current and future generations. It houses a 2,100 sq. foot main exhibition gallery, a 1,425 sq. foot climate-controlled archival storage space, a 164-seat auditorium, a 600 sq. foot library to house its research collections, and other working spaces for staff, volunteers, and researchers. The Museum features permanent and changing local exhibits in Chicago, sponsors traveling exhibits of interest to leatherfolk everywhere, and also offers online exhibits and an online leather gift shop. This is *your* museum, folks. Visit online and/or in person. Become a member. Buy a brick. Sponsor an auditorium seat.

Munches

According to legend that is probably true, in April, 1992, a woman named STella™ posted to the Usenet newsgroup alt.sex.bondage inviting people to join her at a take-out hamburger restaurant called Kirk's, in Palo Alto, about 35 miles south of San Francisco. Several people showed up, and the first "BurgerMunch" (later shortened to munch) was born.

Within a few years, thanks largely to the Internet, munches proliferated wildly; they became common nation- and even world-wide, as an informal, low-key way for people interested in BDSM to meet other like-minded folk in safe surroundings. Munches are grounds for meetings and conversation, usually set at a restaurant or coffee shop; they are not play parties, and play is generally discouraged. Leather dress may or may not be considered appropriate depending on the venue, but civilian wear always is. To find munches in your neck of the woods – or just about any other United States leather event that wishes to be socially visible – visit www.darkheart.com/sceneusa.html

About The Authors

William A. Henkin, Ph.D., is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, a Board Certified Sex Therapist, and a Fellow of the American Academy of Clinical Sexologists. For five years he was the monthly advice columnist for *Fresh Men*; for nine years he was the advice columnist for *Growing Pains*, the publication of the Society of Janus; and from 1987 - 2000 he was Contributing Writer for *Spectator*, conducting interviews and composing dozens of essays and book reviews about the nexus between psychology and human sexuality. He is the author and co-author of more than a dozen books including *The Rocky Horror Picture Show Book*, *The Spiral Tapestry*, *The Psychic Healing Book* (with Amy Wallace) and *Bodywise* (with Joseph Heller), and editor, most recently, of James Williams' first collection of fiction, . . . *But I Know What You Want* (San Francisco: Greenery Press, 2003). When his website is available it can be found at www.drbillsworld.com; at all times an archive of his writings on sexuality is at www.sexuality.org/wh.html. He conducts his private psychotherapy practice in San Francisco.

Certified in advanced clinical hypnotherapy, sex education, Reiki II, EFT, and other forms of energy work, and an initiated priestess and ordained spiritual counselor, **Sybil Holiday** has addressed classes at schools such as San Francisco State University and the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, and has appeared on national and local television and radio programs including *Geraldo*, *People Are Talking*, and *Pittsburgh Today*. As a supervisor at the San Francisco Sex Information switchboard for 2½ years, she spoke individually with hundreds of people about virtually every aspect of sexuality. A member of the San Francisco SM community since the early 1980s, she has worked as a professional dominant as M. Cybelle since 1983. As Sybil Holiday, she works as a hypnotherapist, sex educator and healer, and energy worker specializing in sexuality and BDSM concerns, phobias, traumas, PTSD, and relationship issues. Sybil conducts her private practice in San Francisco. You can learn more about her at her websites at www.spiralway.com and www.mcybelle.com.

Individually and together, Sybil and Bill have made presentations on SM, gender identity, alternate personas, and other topics for a wide

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variety of organizations including National Conferences of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality, the National Sexuality Symposium, the International Foundation for Gender Education, Fantasia Fair, Leatherfest, and NLA: International's Living in Leather. They frequently teach, lecture, and lead workshops in the San Francisco Bay Area's leather, gender, and alternate sex communities, and they have written about erotic power play, erotic age regression, and professional domination for *Sandmutopia Guardian*. *Consensual Sadomasochism* is their first book together. variety

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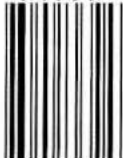


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